



DATE: March 14, 2025
TO: House Finance and Taxation Committee
FROM: David Juma, PE, City Engineer, Williston
RE: Testimony in support of Senate Bill 2323

Chairman Headland and distinguished members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 2323 (SB2323). My name is David Juma, and I have been the City Engineer for the City of Williston for four and half years. I was born and will continue to live in North Dakota. Over the course of my career, I have lived or worked in more than 30 states. Without hesitation, North Dakota is the best place to live and work, and I am happy to be home. North Dakotans are hardworking, forward-thinking, and willing to lend a helping hand when needed. That's what makes our communities so livable and unique to the rest of the country.

As the City Engineer, I am responsible for the sustainability of the existing infrastructure within the City of Williston, meeting future infrastructure needs, and supporting the continued economic growth of the region. The City of Williston provides necessary services to the Western North Dakota region, not just the city. We are the water supply, we handle the waste streams, we have the shops, eateries, grocers, housing, and hotels necessary to support the people of the region. Williston also serves the region as a hub for emergency services.

I have witnessed firsthand the results of the rapid growth of the last oil boom, which benefited the entire state of North Dakota, the greatest in the union. This rapid growth was necessary to support the oil and gas extraction industry. Our water supply and waste streams were overwhelmed, our streets and local infrastructure were damaged, and our local emergency services were overtaxed to name a few of the impacts. Western Area Water Supply Authority (WAWSA) was created to regionalize our water supply and transmission systems, and our water treatment plant was expanded to nearly quadruple in size to accommodate increased demand. The water treatment plant is still owned and operated by the City of Williston, and we are reimbursed by WAWSA for our operational costs.

While the debt for plant expansion and transmission system is carried by WAWSA, it is the five member entities that cover the debt obligation payments through our water rates. Williston is the largest user in the system. We recently confirmed a breach in the raw water intake for the water plant which will require a replacement of the intake lines in the riverbed. Portions of the supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system are also at the end of life in the plant. The current cost estimate for these projects is \$30 million. While these costs are eligible for grant funding through the State Water Commission, the remaining local cost share will be paid



by the member entities. These projects are just two of nearly \$80M of projects necessary for the water treatment plant to continue to serve the growth of Western North Dakota.

During the boom, the population and activity growth was impossible to explain to those who didn't experience it. With the economic downturn of 2008 widespread to other areas of the nation, people flocked to Western North Dakota to participate in the prosperity it promised. This rapid population growth overwhelmed our wastewater treatment facility necessitating the construction of a new facility under the threat of \$25,000 per day fines from the EPA. The City of Williston was forced to build this new facility and assume \$125M in debt to support the rapid growth of the region. Our landfill has also experienced an increase in use and accelerated decrease in lifespan.

An additional \$128M in debt was taken on to build a new airport to support travel to the region due to growth, and \$30M to house the Public Works and Engineering Departments due to an increase in staffing required to maintain the additional infrastructure caused by the population spike. Additionally, two fire halls were constructed to support the region's expansion, and current law enforcement facilities are inadequate. The Williston Police Department is currently sharing space with the Williams County Sheriff and State Highway Patrol Departments. It is routine to see police officers completing their reports in their vehicles in random spots around Williston due to the lack of space.

The rate of growth described typically happens over decades or longer for most communities. Williston experienced it in less than 8 years. The 2020 census indicated that Williston had 29,160 people, just 272 away from doubling in size from 2010 population of 14,716. Many workers in the region are transient, they work shifts of weeks on with weeks off in between. As such, many return home for their days off and do not claim Williston as their home. Effluent discharges at the wastewater treatment plant supports Williston is sustaining approximately 32,500 people.

Like many other cities in North Dakota, Williston has neighborhoods over 100 years old. These older areas of town experience more watermain breaks than normal, excessive frost boils every spring and require higher levels of maintenance by city staff. These areas also contain the majority of lead water service lines which need to be replaced to meet the requirements of the latest EPA mandate for lead and copper service lines. This mandate requires a water distribution system's known lead, galvanized downstream of lead, and certain types of copper lines to be replaced at a minimum of ten percent per year based on a three-year rolling average starting no later than 2027. The City of Williston currently knows of 264 service lines that will be required to be replaced under this EPA mandate at an estimated cost of \$4.6M with another nearly 1,750 lines remaining to be verified. All unverified lines must also be scheduled for



replacement under the rule. Relief to our debt obligations will free up funds to help address these requirements within our system.

Despite these challenges, growth in the region continues at a rapid pace. We are excited at the prospect of the Cerilon GTL, data center, power generation facilities, and other major development within the region. These facilities will add more economic prosperity to the region, provide value-added benefits to the oil and gas extraction, and provide economic diversity untethering us to a degree from the swings in oil and gas extraction. While the complete scope of these facilities is not fully clear to me at this time, I do understand that they will need access, workers, water, and waste stream management. The majority, if not all, of the waste stream management will be provided by the City of Williston; we continue to be the largest capable source in the region. The same can be said for the necessary services the influx of construction workers and permanent personnel will need.

The State recognized the explosive growth of the last oil and gas boom and the need to accommodate it by funding the NDDOT to rebuild and upgrade roads to meet higher safety standards. This massive undertaking is still ongoing within the region along the Highway 85 corridor. These roads are a necessary component to bring goods and people in and out of the region for the betterment of all North Dakotans. The State previously saw the benefit of investing in this necessary infrastructure, and we are hopeful that you do the same in supporting the regional hubs that are economic engines for all of North Dakota. SB2323 provides relief not only for the cities of Dickinson, Minot, and Williston, but also for the regions that we serve. I urge you to support SB2323, it represents an opportunity to provide us with the resources we need to address the challenges that we are still facing due to the rapid expansion of our region.

Thank you for your consideration and time,

David Juma, PE
City Engineer
City of Williston