

Creation of a Provincial Combative Sport Commission
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

WHEREAS there is public interest in the operation of, attendance at and participation in combative sports events in Alberta; and

WHEREAS section 535.1 of the Municipal Government Act contemplates the establishment of a commission by bylaw for the sanctioning of combative sports; and

WHEREAS several communities in Alberta have established commissions; and

WHEREAS there appears to be little coordination or consistency amongst the existing commissions throughout Alberta; and

WHEREAS there are inherent risks to the operation and regulation of combative sports events that warrant a more detailed and coordinated approach; and

WHEREAS the regulation and sanctioning of combative sports is not a core local government function or service; and

WHEREAS other provinces in Canada have created commissions at the provincial level;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association urge the provincial government to create a provincial commission to sanction combative sports events throughout the Province of Alberta.

Background:

Council for the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has received requests and statements of interest from the public, expressing desire to hold and attend combative sports events, such as mixed martial arts events. In response, municipal administration undertook significant research of this matter and notes that Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories all have a provincial/territorial sanctioning body in place. New Brunswick, Alberta and British Columbia have no provincial legislation in place, but do delegate authority to municipalities.

Alberta's Municipal Government Act (MGA), specifically section 535.1, makes some provision for the establishment of a municipal combative sports commission through bylaw. At the present time, there are combative sports commissions in Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Cold Lake and Penhold. The bylaws in place vary significantly from one municipality to another, which means that there is no coordination or consistency in the regulation of events throughout the province.

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Despite the creation of commissions in several Alberta communities, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has concerns that there appears to be ongoing risk and compliance challenges to commission operations. There also appears to be little coordination or consistency amongst the existing commissions, including how information should be shared, standards on how drug testing should be undertaken, or if there should be communication amongst the commissions regarding participants who have been banned or suspended.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo does not regulate or sanction any other sports and has no internal expertise in this area. It also does not consider the regulation and sanctioning of these types of events as a core local government function or service.

The creation of a provincial commission is preferred in order to ensure standardized rules and procedures reflecting best practices are implemented consistently throughout Alberta on all matters concerning combative sports events, and specifically with respect to testing and participant suspensions.

A resolution of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties supporting the creation of a provincial commission to sanction combative sports events throughout the Province of Alberta is critical to ensuring consistency and coordination of the regulation of events in Alberta.