

County of Aroostook

COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

RYAN D. PELLETIER



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

PAUL J. UNDERWOOD
PRESQUE ISLE

NORMAN L. FOURNIER
WALLAGRASS

WILLIAM T. DOBBINS
HOULTON

February 29, 2024

TO: Honorable Members of the Appropriations & Financial Affairs Committee

Honorable Members of the ~~Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee~~

FR: Ryan D. Pelletier, County Administrator, Aroostook County

RE: **Aroostook County Testimony in support of LD 2214 – 2024 Supplemental Budget (Part A, p. A-123) regarding rural patrol.**

Dear Senator Rotundo; Representative Sachs and Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee;

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

My name is Ryan D. Pelletier and I am a resident of St. Agatha. I also serve as the County Administrator for Aroostook County and today I am here to testify in support of LD 2214 and in particular, Part A-123 which proposes new state police positions to enhance rural police patrol services in Maine.

When we first think of rural patrol, our first thought is often rural counties, however, it is important to remember that every county in Maine has rural areas including our most populated counties and rural patrol is necessary regardless of whether you live in northern Maine like I do, or in parts of rural York County in Southern Maine.

The Aroostook County Sheriff's Office and the Maine State Police have a wonderful working relationship in 'The County' and they work hand in hand to provide rural patrol services from Allagash to Wypitlock. For your reference, the distance between Allagash and Wypitlock is over 150 miles (none of it on the I-

95) and takes over 3 and a half hours to drive one way. We are known as the largest county East of the Mississippi for a reason.

In order for this partnership to continue to work successfully we need to ensure that our local Troop F is adequately staffed to meet the call demands for rural patrol. Over the last 20 years, our number of Deputies on patrol in Aroostook County has doubled to meet these demands while we have seen the number of Troopers in Aroostook County decrease by approximately 12 positions during that same time period.

In the past few years, we have also seen two police departments close permanently and both the State Police and the Sheriff's Office are called upon by other active local departments to cover shifts due to lack of personnel. We can't continue to kick the can further down the road and the time is now to address this need.

Aroostook County supports the Governor's FY 24-25 Supplemental Budget proposal regarding rural patrol coverage including the funding to establish new State Police positions. We support these additional funds to allow the State Police to meet its rural patrol obligations, continue the excellent coverage arrangements to close gaps, and provide much needed property tax relief to our citizens.

In closing, I thank you for your time and consideration and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan D. Pelletier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ryan D. Pelletier
County Administrator
Aroostook County