

Energy

Alberta's energy sector plays an important role in the province's economic development. RMA members are often among those impacted by new energy projects through increased municipal costs and revenues, employment opportunities, and environmental implications. As the Government of Alberta shifts its focus towards the development of renewable energy, rural municipalities will be responsible for hosting and supporting such infrastructure.

What is RMA's position on the importance of having a municipal perspective in energy production and development?

- Rural municipalities are often directly impacted by energy projects because rural Alberta is the home to the majority of Alberta's energy resources. Rural municipalities should be consulted before an energy project is approved, during its construction, during operation, and upon its decommissioning.
- The instability of an energy-based economy has significant local impacts for rural municipalities since energy development has traditionally been critical to the viability of rural Alberta. A diversified, stable, and sustainable energy industry will not only benefit the province as a whole, but will provide rural municipalities with planning and growth certainty.

What financial considerations do rural municipalities have with respect to energy production and development?

- Rural municipalities are leaders in piloting alternative and renewable energy technologies on community facilities. Not only have these technologies assisted rural municipalities and residents in lowering their long-term energy costs, but they also contribute to mitigating the impacts of climate change.
- The costs of preparing for energy project approval hearings under the regulatory system often preclude municipalities from participating. RMA calls on the Government of Alberta to ensure that municipalities have an opportunity to make their concerns heard at approval hearings.
- While energy projects often provide local and provincial economic benefits, they may also place great strain on municipal infrastructure. Taxation revenues collected by municipalities that host energy projects are typically required to maintain and expand infrastructure to accommodate increased use. RMA supports this taxation revenue remaining with the municipality so they are equipped to tend to the infrastructure needs of their community.

What collaborative relationships are essential to rural municipalities in energy production and development?

- RMA works collaboratively with rural municipalities, other levels of government, regulators, industry, landowners, and other stakeholders to encourage best management practices for energy production and development.
- RMA encourages rural municipalities and industry partners to engage proactively on energy development, planning, reclamation, and address local concerns in an efficient manner.
- Both rail and pipelines are vital to allowing energy resources to reach market. Each of these modes of transportation carries with them planning, environmental, and safety challenges for municipalities. As such, municipalities should be consulted on proposed pipeline or rail infrastructure for energy use.

How does the work of RMA support the sustainability of the energy industry?

- Through the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre (MCCAC), RMA works with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) to provide municipalities with grants and rebates for energy efficient building and infrastructure retrofits.
- To support consumer protection, RMA is actively involved with organizations such as the Utilities Consumer Advocate (UCA) and value-added initiatives including RMA's energy program focused on aggregated purchasing.
- Rural electrification associations (REAs) continue to operate and adapt despite changes and challenges in the electricity marketplace. Since they first electrified rural communities across Alberta, REAs have been institutions that have supported rural industries and residents with community owned electricity.
- RMA has been a vocal supporter of greater market access for Alberta's natural resources. Natural resources exported to Canada's tide water benefit all Canadians through greater taxation revenue and new jobs for Albertans.

What current energy related issues are impacting rural Alberta?

Climate Leadership Plan and Alternative Energy Development

- The Government of Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan has the potential to make Alberta a world leader in renewable energy development and climate change

mitigation. However, provincial decision-makers must consider the local impacts that transforming Alberta's energy industry will have on rural communities in the form of potential job losses and reduction in industrial taxation revenues. RMA and rural municipalities look forward to working with the Government of Alberta to address these impacts.

- When transitioning from existing energy sources to renewable energy sources, the Government of Alberta must consider not only the broader environmental benefits of such a transition, but also the local economic and community impacts as well. Many of Alberta's communities have historically grown around the extraction and production of energy resources, and any policy changes that devalue resources should be accompanied by concrete plans to ensure that the impacted communities remain viable.
- Renewable energy projects need responsible end-of-life management plans to prevent such projects from turning into environmental liabilities on Alberta's landscape.

Electricity Transmission and Rates

- Alberta Energy should ensure that the retail energy market is regulated in such a way to maximize competition and ensure that Albertans receive the best possible energy rates. The transition to a capacity market must occur in a way that maintains the integrity of the grid and is developed through consultation with RMA and other knowledgeable stakeholders.
- Alberta Energy should require the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) to formally include the review of municipal land-use plans when reviewing transmission development applications, it is imperative that municipalities be included in the process.
- Rural electrification associations (REAs) are vital sources of retail energy competition in many rural areas. Any changes to Alberta's retail electricity market should ensure that REAs are able to operate on a level playing field with investor-owned utilities.

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