



RMA
RURAL MUNICIPALITIES
of ALBERTA

RMA Advocacy Report Card

Fall 2019



**RMA Advocacy Report Card:
Fall 2019**

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Introduction

The Advocacy Report Card is divided into two sections.

- **Section 1** provides detailed information on the government response to the spring 2019 resolutions and includes the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) Board of Directors’ reaction to the response as well as anticipated follow up.
- **Section 2** updates members by reporting on all active resolutions, grouped by advocacy area.

Please note that any reference to the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties or AAMDC in the Advocacy Report Card is equivalent to the Rural Municipalities of Alberta or RMA.

Definition of Terms

Following the adoption of resolutions at RMA conventions, resolutions are sent to the appropriate level of government for response. Once a response is received, RMA labels the resolution with one of five indicators which determines the status of that resolution. The intention of providing a status for each resolution is to evaluate whether the government response meets the intent of the resolution. The status is not intended to reflect RMA’s advocacy efforts on a resolution.

Below are the descriptions of all resolution ranking statuses.

STATUS	DESCRIPTION
Accepted	Meets RMA criteria as outlined in a) the resolution and b) as per the expectations of the Board of Directors.
Accepted in Principle	The development addresses that action is being taken to meet the intent of the resolution, but further action is required.
Accepted in Part	Some resolutions include multiple ‘asks’ in the operative clause. This status indicates that one of the ‘asks’ has been met while others require further action.
Intent Not Met	The intent of the resolution has not been met as outlined in the resolution or the current developments do not meet the approval of the Board of Directors.
Incomplete Information	RMA has not received enough information to assign a status. Further follow-up is required for RMA to make an informed decision on how to proceed.

Section 1: Government Responses to Spring 2019 Resolutions

RMA recently received responses to the resolutions adopted at the fall 2018 convention from the Government of Alberta and Government of Canada. The following table provides an overview of the initial assessment to resolutions following the response. **RMA emphasizes that this table only reflects the initial response received from the Government of Alberta and Government of Canada and that advocacy efforts on all resolutions are in progress.**

Reactions at a Glance

#	RESOLUTION NAME	STATUS
1-19S	Municipal Support for the Energy Industry	Accepted in Principle
2-19S	Access to Agriculture-Specific Mental Health Resources	Intent Not Met
3-19S	Light Weight Concrete Bridge Girders	Intent Not Met
4-19S	Bighorn Country Proposal Consultation	Accepted in Principle
5-19S	Amendments Required for Crown Land Recreation Disposition Applications and Renewals	Intent Not Met
6-19S	Prevent Implementation of Seed Royalty on Producers for Farm Saved Seed	Intent Not Met
7-19S	Solar Power Reclamation	Accepted
8-19S	Reinstatement of the Municipal Officer's Expense Allowance	Accepted in Principle
9-19S	Watershed Planning and Advisory Council Funding	Intent Not Met
10-19S	Strategic Direction for the RMA	Accepted
11-19S	Update of the Provincial Code of Practice for Compost Facilities	Intent Not Met
12-19S	Making Children's Healthcare a Priority in Alberta	Accepted in Part

Resolution 1-19S

Municipal Support for the Energy Industry

Strathcona County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy, Alberta Economic Development and Trade**

WHEREAS in 2017, Canada lost more than \$50 billion in investments through the cancellation of two nation-building energy projects, the TransCanada Energy East Pipeline and the Pacific Northwest LNG Project, that represented significant opportunities in capital investment, jobs, tax revenue, and economic growth;

WHEREAS the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers estimates the impact of the Western Canadian Select-Brent Crude (WCS-Brent) price differential to be at least \$13 billion since 2016 and as high as \$50 million per day in October 2018, resulting in \$7.2 billion in lost revenue to the Government of Alberta and \$800 million in income taxes to the Government of Canada;

WHEREAS the price differential is at least in part due to the lack of pipeline capacity to transport energy products derived from Alberta to international markets;

WHEREAS any reduction in the price of Alberta oil in comparison to the price of Brent has significant impacts on provincial and federal revenue, as well as energy industry investment;

WHEREAS many Albertan families and businesses are suffering in lost jobs, income, and property values due in part to the lack of market access for Alberta oil; and

WHEREAS Canada's and Alberta's energy industries lead the world in environmental responsibility, and human rights and labour standards;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate for the Government of Alberta to further develop and implement a targeted, national education and marketing campaign on behalf of Albertans in order to offset foreign protectionism and de-marketing campaigns, regulatory delays, and the combined infrastructure and economic factors that are creating a significant, negative effect on Canada's local, provincial, and national economies. The elements of the education and marketing campaign include as outlined in "Schedule A";

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Alberta provide resources to offset the combined negative impacts affecting the energy industry through:

- 1. the continuation of the Petrochemicals Diversification Program;**
- 2. key energy industry-supporting infrastructure development; and**
- 3. a continued strong presence and advocacy with federal, municipal and foreign governments.**

Government Response

Alberta Energy

Our government will create an energy war room as part of a larger strategy that includes a public inquiry into foreign-funded meddling in our economy and politics. The war room will combat misinformation about Alberta's energy. Recognizing the world needs more energy produced by jurisdictions with responsible energy

development, reclamation, and environmental standards to fuel the demands of the world's growing economy, the energy war room will re-assert Alberta as a leader in this field. In addition, our government will challenge the charitable status of foundations that are funneling foreign money into anti-Alberta campaigns. This will include ending provincial government funding for groups involved in the so-called "Tar Sands Campaign." We will launch a public inquiry into the foreign sources of funding into the anti-Alberta energy campaign, and ban foreign money from interfering in Alberta politics. As part of this initiative, we will ask the energy industry to significantly increase its own advocacy efforts.

We are continuing the Petrochemicals Diversification Program (PDP). All approved PDP agreements will be honoured. We are placing a strong focus on exploring options to revitalize Alberta's natural gas and related industries, including ways to support the diversification of our petrochemicals sector. Premier Kenney appointed the Honourable Dale Nally as the Associate Minister of Natural Gas to work with industry and government stakeholders, including rural municipalities.

Under the PDP, two projects were approved to receive royalty credits. Both projects will process propane into polypropylene plastic. Inter Pipeline was approved to receive up to \$200 million in royalty credits for its proposed propane dehydrogenation facility, which is part of the company's Heartland Petrochemical Complex. This project is under construction. The Canada Kuwait Petrochemical Corporation, a joint venture between Pembina Pipeline Corporation and the Petrochemical Industries Company K.S.C. of Kuwait, was approved to receive up to \$300 million in royalty credits for its integrated propane dehydrogenation and polypropylene petrochemical complex.

In addition, we have launched a multi-media campaign to urge the federal government to say yes to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project. The government also launched a campaign in Vancouver to ensure British Columbians know the benefits of this pipeline. The campaign is a key tool in telling Canadians and the federal government about the impact of Alberta's energy industry on the country.

The government will use other tools at our disposal to defend the energy sector and interests of Albertans, including legal challenges, inquiries, and media campaigns. We recently challenged leading international publications to print facts about the industry.

Alberta Economic Development, Trade and Tourism

Resolution 1-19S aligns well with our plan to get our energy sector creating jobs again. Energy diversification programs have been one of the avenues used to attract major private capital investment to Alberta. This government will honour the agreements made by the previous government under the PDP.

The Government of Alberta can acknowledge its role to advance and promote the overall Canadian energy industry landscape. Specifically, Government of Alberta ministries like Alberta Economic Development, Trade and Tourism and Alberta Energy work continually with stakeholders, such as the Alberta Industrial Heartland Association and Western Diversification Canada, to name just a few, on energy-related initiatives.

The Government of Alberta is placing a strong focus on accelerating the revitalization of Alberta's natural gas and related industries, including support of our petrochemicals sector. Through the leadership of the Associate Minister of Natural Gas, the government will develop an integrated approach to our natural gas resources. This

includes a campaign in support of Alberta's energy industry; we know it is vital to communicate economic growth and national unity.

This government recognizes competitive tax rates, private property rights, and sensible regulation create growth and jobs. We aim to increase regulatory efficiency and support decisions that will make the downstream sector grow and be competitive with other jurisdictions. This government will be focused on standing up for our 151,000 energy workers that need their voices heard. We will promote and educate on the importance of the energy industry to provincial, federal, and global economies

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates that the Ministry of Energy is creating new initiatives to further develop and implement a targeted national campaign to increase education surrounding Alberta's energy sector through the creation of an "energy war room", the launch of a multi-media campaign to urge the federal government to approve new pipelines, and increased defense of Alberta's energy sector by providing education about the importance of the energy industry to provincial, federal and global economies. RMA appreciates the Government of Alberta's confirmation that the Petrochemicals Diversification Program will continue and that two projects have already been approved under this program. These projects will help revitalize Alberta's natural gas sector resulting in job creation and economic growth. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Principle** and will monitor the Ministry of Energy's progress in developing the energy war room.

Resolution 2-19S

Access to Agriculture-Specific Mental Health Resources

Lac Ste. Anne County

Carried

► ***Advocacy Target: Alberta Agriculture, Alberta Community and Social Services, Alberta Health***

WHEREAS agriculture is economically essential, both provincially and federally, and the agriculture industry needs healthy farmers to function; and

WHEREAS agriculture is a stressful occupation, which has become especially clear with three consecutive years of poor harvests, livestock feed shortages and other effects of climate change; and

WHEREAS despite mental illness diagnoses increasing, a large stigma exists around mental illness and asking for help which is especially prominent in industries like agriculture where members are isolated and have a distinct workplace culture of not requesting help; and

WHEREAS Alberta does not have an agriculture-specific mental health crisis line, although neighbouring provinces do (e.g. Saskatchewan); and

WHEREAS 310-FARM is a well-known and commonly utilized number that can direct callers to an abundance of resources, but only offers agronomic information during office hours;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Alberta facilitates the formation of a free, year-round, all hours, mental health crisis hotline, dedicated to the agriculture industry, providing farm families with direct access to uniquely qualified professionals and resources, whom have both an understanding of mental health issues and agriculture-specific stresses;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Alberta secure long term, sustainable funding for the operation and maintenance of this mental health crisis hotline.

Government Response

Target ministries have indicated that Alberta Health is the lead ministry for this resolution and should be the primary contact if further advocacy is required.

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry

With renewed focus on mental health, it is important for municipalities to work with Alberta Health to advance this important cause. A 2016 study from the University of Guelph found that 45 per cent of farmers had high stress, while 40 per cent said they would feel uneasy asking for professional help. Thirty-five per cent of Canadian producers can be classified as depressed, and 58 per cent of producers meet the criteria for anxiety.

Farm Management Canada (FMC) is conducting an industry-wide, national study on the connection between mental health and farm business management. FMC has put together an Advisory Committee made up of various farmers from around the country, as well as stakeholders who will be consulted to ensure the questions being asked reflect the issues of farmers. The Rural Municipalities of Alberta may consider contacting FMC as a means of providing an Alberta perspective, and to further validate the need for the proposed service.

Alberta Community and Social Services

Through Alberta Supports, Community and Social Services provides referrals to a number of free mental health crisis hotlines. The Distress Line is administered by 211 Alberta. This line offers free support to those experiencing mental health crises. Alberta Supports ensures Albertans have access to social programs and services through multiple channels. Services are accessed by visiting www.alberta.ca/alberta-supports.aspx, by calling the Alberta Supports Contact Centre at 1-877-644-9992, and/or visiting one of the 47 Alberta Supports centres across the province. The resources and referral services provided by Alberta Supports and 211 Alberta are available 24/7, year-round, to all Albertans, at no cost.

Alberta Health

We are making it easier to navigate the health care system and creating better ways to help people get the substance use and mental health supports they need. Our government has committed \$100 million to make the right investments and provide the right services to improve mental health resources. We must continue to work together to support each other and our communities to build the mental health system required to help people recover and live healthy, productive lives.

We are working closely with partners to improve community-led mental health supports in rural areas. We have expanded the Mental Health Capacity Building in Schools program to 18 more schools, including in rural and remote areas of the province. This program helps 100,000 children across Alberta. Alberta Health is providing \$1.6 million over three years to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and is working closely with them to improve community-led mental health supports in rural areas. Alberta Health Services (AHS) is increasing mental health services to remote communities.

We are also piloting and evaluating e-counselling options that provide mental health counselling services via the Internet. AHS's Virtual Child and Youth Navigation Teams support children, youth, and families with timely access to substance use and mental health services. Telehealth is used for specialized service delivery in rural areas in combination with local community Addiction and Mental Health employees. There has been an increase of 42 per cent from 2014/15 to 2017/18 in Mental Health Telehealth services.

Health Link—811 is the AHS-operated provincial 24/7 phone line that provides access to information on services across the province, with over-the-phone assessment by a Registered Nurse with advice or referral to further treatment. Health Link—811 also answers the Alberta Mental Health Help Line and provides advice 24/7. AHS recognizes the value in discussing how to promote Health Link—811 to farmers and farm families. There is opportunity for rural municipalities to help AHS be more aware of specific community resources for farmers and farm families. AHS can then educate their employees to recommend them as appropriate.

In partnership with United Way and the CMHA, Alberta Health is expanding the 211 service database to be provincewide by 2020. Mental health information is available online at MyHealth.Alberta.ca or informAlberta.ca.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response highlights existing mental health resources, including 24/7 help lines that are accessible in rural areas. The Alberta Health response also includes a budget commitment to increase funding for addictions and mental health services by \$100 million. However, there is no indication as to how this additional funding will be distributed geographically in Alberta. The Alberta Health response also identifies the possibility for rural municipalities to provide Health Link – 811 with local resources that are available for farm families; Health Link can then provide this information to those that call in from that area. As follow up, RMA staff will reach out to Health Link about how to best

facilitate this information-sharing, and contact Farm Management Canada to explore the possibility of providing input into their study on mental health and farm business.

Because the government responses do not commit to an agriculture-specific mental health line, or any funding for this resource, this resolution is assigned the status of **Intent Not Met**. While the response from Alberta Health does not satisfy the intent of the resolution, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food has recommended that the Government of Canada expand agriculture-specific mental health resources. RMA will continue to monitor developments at the federal level and advocate to Alberta Health for an agriculture-specific mental health line.

Resolution 3-19S

Light Weight Concrete Bridge Girders

County of Northern Lights

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Transportation**

WHEREAS in the early to mid-2000s, a decision was made within Alberta Transportation to change the specifications for concrete to allow for light weight aggregate in bridge girders; and

WHEREAS there was a quality control issue with this concrete and it has resulted in premature deterioration of some bridge girders; and

WHEREAS municipalities are required to utilize the specifications set out by Alberta Transportation when undertaking bridge work, and do not have input into the specifications or any changes to said specifications; and

WHEREAS Alberta Transportation set the specifications and the change in aggregate was incorrectly accepted, or missed by Alberta Transportation, and therefore Alberta Transportation should be taking action to correct this situation; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Transportation has advised that Alberta Transportation is not interested in pursuing legal action against the concrete suppliers, and the cost of repairing and/or replacing these deteriorating bridge girders places a considerable cost on municipalities with multiple bridges affected; and

WHEREAS the safety of the travelling public could be severely impacted by any failure of a bridge structure on either highways or municipal roadways;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to establish a program for financial assistance, over and above current Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program funding, to municipalities that manage bridges affected by the premature deterioration of “SC” light weight bridge girders.

Government Response

Alberta Transportation

The “SC” girder was a standard concrete girder commonly used on provincial highway bridges and municipal road bridges between 1990 and 2007. In 2010, Alberta Transportation became aware of premature deterioration of some structures using these girders. By 2015, 36 of the 88 bridges (nine provincial and 27 municipal) of this type, built between 2003 and 2007, were showing unexpected signs of damage.

An engineering study of six representative sites was commissioned by Alberta Transportation and led by a steering committee, which included municipal government representatives. The findings of the study, which became available in January 2017, concluded that the lightweight aggregate used in the concrete for these girders was not freeze-thaw resistant. Recommended solutions ranged from repairing and sealing the exterior girders to replacing all of the girders. Extrapolating the study’s recommendations to the 36 affected bridges was estimated to cost approximately \$5.4 million (\$1.2 million for Alberta Transportation and \$4.2 million for the 15 affected municipalities). Aggregate testing reports, as required by contract specifications, were not delivered for any of the six bridges studied (this has been dealt with in the delivery of ongoing projects). The problem might have been

identified sooner if these reports had been delivered. Following the study, Alberta Transportation considered several potential responses, including filing lawsuits with the courts; however, the department chose to not initiate any lawsuits related to its projects. After receiving legal advice, the department noted all parties involved (i.e., province, municipalities, company owners, and contractors) would have to seek legal advice and initiate any lawsuits independently.

Since all parties had a role in following (or confirming compliance with) the specification, and the link between the specification and the freeze-thaw issue is indirect, a lawsuit would likely be complicated.

Alberta Transportation shared the engineering study results with the affected municipalities, along with the department's assessment of potential actions for the 27 municipal bridges. The department also published a bridge inspection bulletin that provided guidance on how to rate these girders and which maintenance options to recommend.

Alberta Transportation has not provided special consideration to the SC girder bridges within the Local Road Bridge Program (LRBP) component of the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program. It is important to note that the LRBP is considered as funding assistance only, and bridge and roadwork is the financial responsibility of each municipality.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response provides a summary of why legal action was not pursued. Alberta Transportation identifies the resources they developed and shared with affected municipalities to mitigate the effects of the deteriorating girders. Finally, Alberta Transportation confirms that there is no additional funding for the repair or replacement of the municipal SC girder bridges. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to monitor resources available to municipalities to address the SC girder bridges.

Resolution 4-19S

Bighorn Country Proposal Consultation

Brazeau County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Parks**

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta is moving forward with plans to implement the Bighorn Country Proposal; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta's current consultation process has excluded key stakeholders such as municipalities and the cancellation of public information sessions has limited the ability of citizens to provide feedback; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta's current consultation format does not foster open and effective dialogue between key stakeholders and provincial officials; and

WHEREAS the Bighorn Country Proposal has the potential to impact the oil and gas, agriculture and forestry industries, which are drivers of the Alberta economy and a source of revenue for the provision of government programs and services;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to delay the Bighorn Country Proposal until an inclusive and comprehensive consultation process that includes and respects First Nations, municipalities, stakeholder groups and residents of Alberta can be developed.

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Parks

Alberta Environment and Parks engaged with more than 74,000 Albertans during consultation on the Bighorn Country proposal. This consultation included representatives from industry, municipalities, Indigenous communities, stakeholder groups, and those who currently use the land for their livelihoods or for recreation. The Government of Alberta will not be proceeding with the previously proposed iteration of the Bighorn Country Proposal.

Future land use planning decisions, including recreation and conservation planning in the Bighorn area, will be dealt with through the North Saskatchewan regional planning process under the Land-use Framework. We will be considering the comments and perspectives Albertans have already shared. We will be listening closely to local people, municipalities, Indigenous peoples, and other stakeholders, so we can determine how to best manage the headwaters area of the North Saskatchewan region. This input includes ideas for use of the area and problems that need to be solved.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates that they will not be proceeding with the previous government's proposed plan for protected areas in Bighorn Country. The Minister of Environment and Parks has stated that residents, municipal officials and First Nations groups have raised concerns about how the proposal might affect oil and gas explorations and off-road vehicle use, and that economic and environmental concerns were not adequately answered through the initial consultation process. The Government of Alberta response indicates that future land use planning decisions will be dealt with

through the North Saskatchewan regional planning process under the Land-use Framework. RMA appreciates that under the North Saskatchewan regional planning process, the government will consult with local residents, municipalities, Indigenous groups and other stakeholders to determine how best to manage the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan region. However, since the new consultation process has not begun, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Principle**, and will re-evaluate the resolution based on the progress of further consultation.

Resolution 5-19S

Amendments Required for Crown Land Recreation Disposition Applications and Renewals

County of Grande Prairie

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Parks**

WHEREAS changes to policy have forced not for profit (NFP) organizations to turn to local municipalities and seek unbudgeted financial support and administrative guidance to renew dispositions for which they have historically been upstanding, long-term stewards; and

WHEREAS the new disposition system for Crown land has been designed for industrial applicants and is not practical or financially sustainable for NFP organizations wishing to maintain or renew their dispositions; and

WHEREAS the current requirement by Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) of a one-thousand-dollar-per-acre security deposit for NFP organizations occupying Crown dispositions is not realistic; and

WHEREAS the current requirement by AEP to have NFP organizations upgrade previously held survey plans to current Crown standards places a significant and unforeseen financial burden on NFP organizations which also is not realistic; and

WHEREAS the process to apply and complete an AEP application for Crown land dispositions is complicated and cumbersome for NFP applicants thereby resulting in additional expenses to hire a consultant to file the application; and

WHEREAS there is interest from municipalities, community organizations and volunteer service groups to provide feedback to the Government of Alberta on the current process involving dispositions and NFP applicants;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request the Government of Alberta to amend their policies and requirements on Crown land dispositions (leases) for not for profit organizations and municipalities;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA request the Government of Alberta to engage in additional public consultation with municipalities and not for profit organizations on the policies, requirements and process to lease Crown lands.

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Parks

Albertans deserve a fair, straightforward and comprehensive approval process. The province's environmental and economic vibrancy depend on it. Alberta Environment and Parks recognizes the concerns that municipalities and not-for-profit organizations have shared with us regarding recreation disposition applications and renewals. Alberta Environment and Parks also recognizes the excellent stewardship demonstrated by not-for-profit

organizations and their work to protect our environment and ensure all Albertans have opportunities to explore our amazing landscapes.

The Government of Alberta has committed to strengthening partnerships with not-for-profit park societies across Alberta, including setting aside \$1 million over four years to pilot an expanded role with park societies. Initial scoping discussions are underway with Friends of Fish Creek on outcomes of this pilot at Fish Creek Provincial Park. Beyond this pilot, the Government of Alberta is committed to ensuring all parties and stakeholders, including not-for-profits, have access to the information and have efficient, consistent, and easy-to-use tools and resources they need to navigate the disposition renewal process.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta's response indicates some recognition of the concerns that municipalities and not-for-profit organizations have shared regarding disposition applications and renewals. However, the intent of the resolution is not addressed through the creation of the Fish Creek Provincial Park pilot. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and the RMA will continue to work with the Government of Alberta to fulfill the intent of this resolution.

Resolution 6-19S

Prevent Implementation of Seed Royalty on Producers for Farm Saved Seed

County of Northern Lights

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Canada Food Inspection Agency**

WHEREAS Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) are considering implementing a system to collect royalties on farm saved seed;

WHEREAS paying royalties on farm saved seed will increase the price of seed and decrease profit margins for farmers;

WHEREAS royalties on farm saved seed could limit seed choices for farmers as seed companies move to deregister old varieties, which could mean farmers would be forced to pay royalties and to grow only newer varieties;

WHEREAS AAFC and CFIA have not outlined details on how much a royalty would be, how it would be collected or how potentially \$100 million in royalties would be dispersed;

WHEREAS farmers currently pay check-offs on almost all grains they deliver to elevators, some of these funds are funneled through the Western Grain Research Foundation (WGRF) and used for variety breeding programs;

WHEREAS the WGRF Endowment Fund has received the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific rail overages and penalties under the Maximum Revenue Entitlement Program every year since 2000 and had a balance of just under \$132 million at the end of 2017. This money has been collected from farmers via excessive freight charges, and could be used to fund research;

WHEREAS a royalty system has potential to decrease farmers' ability to operate profitably and make sound agronomic decisions;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency abandon the proposal to implement the adoption of End Point Royalties or farm saved seed "trailing royalty contracts".

Government Response

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

As you may be aware, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency were asked by the Grains Value Chain Roundtable, a consultative body with broad representation from across the value chain, to launch public consultations on two proposed seed royalty models. The purpose of these proposed "value-creation" models is to stimulate greater investment and innovation in Canada's cereal sector. The first phase of the consultative process was launched in late 2018 and is an initial step in what government views as a multi-stage discussion process.

The Government of Canada understands that many farmers place considerable value on their ability to save seed and often choose specific crop kinds and varieties that allow for replanting of saved seed in subsequent years. At the same time, a large number of agriculture sector stakeholders have signaled a

desire for Canada to consider some form of value-creation model that would allow increased investment in wheat variety development by both public and private breeders across the country. Many producers see increased investment in research and breeding as key to ensuring the long-term profitability and competitiveness of Canada's cereals sector.

The government remains open to hearing all perspectives on this matter, and will consider the feedback heard to inform next steps on the consultative process.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) response outlines the rationale for seed royalties on farm saved seed: to increase research investment in Canada's cereal sector. CFIA also acknowledges the interest of farmers to save seed for their own use in the next growing season. A planned online consultation for spring 2019 was delayed, and there has not been an update since. Because RMA has not received notice that the program is formally ending, this resolution is assigned the status of **Intent Not Met**. RMA will continue to engage with CFIA through consultations on this topic.

Resolution 7-19S

Solar Power Reclamation

MD of Taber

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy, Alberta Utilities Commission**

WHEREAS the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) regulates the utilities sector, natural gas and electricity markets to protect social, economic and environmental interests of Alberta where competitive market forces do not; and

WHEREAS the AUC ensures that electric facilities are built, operated and decommissioned in an efficient and environmentally responsible way; and

WHEREAS provincial growth and policy decisions have contributed to increased development of solar power plants and their associated infrastructure in recent years; and

WHEREAS solar power plants have a limited life-cycle and will require either decommissioning or repowering at the end of that life cycle; and

WHEREAS if a solar power plant is abandoned during or after its life cycle, the components and associated infrastructure may be abandoned on the landscape, becoming an unsafe and unsightly nuisance, creating a costly cleanup for landowners, and further, the affected municipality; and

WHEREAS pursuant to Section 5(1)(h) of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, the AUC may make regulations as to the measures to be taken in the construction, operation or abandonment of any power plant for the protection of life, property and wildlife; and

WHEREAS pursuant to Section 5(4) of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, subject to the approval of the Minister responsible for the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*, the AUC may make regulations as to the measures to be taken in the abandonment of any power plant for the control of pollution and ensuring environment conservation; and

WHEREAS the AUC falls within the structure of the Ministry of Energy, and the Ministry develops policy for renewable electricity;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to direct the Alberta Utilities Commission to establish a method of ensuring that there is funding in place for abandoned wind and solar energy to be decommissioned and reclaimed in an environmentally-responsible way.

Government Response

Alberta Energy and Alberta Utilities Commission

Alberta Energy and the Alberta Utilities Commission have no input as the resolution is not in their mandate.

Alberta Environment and Parks

The Government of Alberta is committed to ensuring that renewable energy operations generating renewable electricity, like solar, are abandoned and reclaimed in a responsible way. Alberta Environment and Parks understands that reclamation of industrial lands is important to Albertans.

In response to those concerns, the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation was recently amended to include renewable energy operations as activities requiring reclamation at end of life. In addition, the Conservation and Reclamation Directive for Renewable Energy Operations was released in support of the new regulatory requirement. The directive sets out the conservation and reclamation requirements and outcomes for Renewable Energy Operations, specifically those producing renewable electricity from wind, solar, or geothermal.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates that this resolution is not within the mandate of the Alberta Utilities Commission. However, Alberta Environment and Parks has amended the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation to include renewable energy operation as an activity requiring reclamation at end of life. Under the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation, security, such as cash, must be submitted by the operator to the Government of Alberta to account for reclamation costs. If an operator fails to comply with the Conservation and Reclamation Directive, then the security will be used for the reclamation at end of life for renewable resources. As a result of the inclusion of renewable energy operations in the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation, RMA assigns this resolution as **Accepted**.

Resolution 8-19S

Reinstatement of the Municipal Officer's Expense Allowance

Clearwater County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Federation of Canadian Municipalities**

WHEREAS until the 2019 tax year, a municipal corporation or board could pay a non-accountable expense allowance to an elected officer to perform the duties of that office; and

WHEREAS until the 2019 tax year, if the municipal officer's expense allowance was not more than one-third of the officer's salary and allowances it was not required to be considered as "employment income" on the employee's T4 slip; and

WHEREAS federal Bill C-44, which received Royal Assent on June 22, 2017, eliminated tax exemption allowances for members of legislative assemblies and certain municipal officers; and

WHEREAS the municipal officer's expense allowance tax exemption was a tool that assisted municipalities in keeping municipal council honorariums lower, thereby having less impact on the local taxpayers; and

WHEREAS the elimination of the municipal officer's expense allowance has required many municipalities to increase municipal officers' compensation to offset the difference in compensation, thereby increasing the tax burden locally;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta requests that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities ask the Government of Canada to consider reinstating the municipal officer's expense allowance.

Government Response

Thank you for your resolution submission to FCM about the One-third Tax Exemption for Municipal Officers. We understand that this issue is an important concern to your community and we appreciate you bringing it to the attention of FCM.

Staff have reviewed the content of the resolution and categorized it as Category D – In accordance with existing FCM policy. This category contains resolutions that have been considered by FCM in the previous three years or that are in accordance with FCM's standing policy and advocacy priorities. In this case, the resolution will be received by the Board of Directors, at its September 2019 meeting, for information only. More details on FCM's resolution procedures can be found [here](#).

FCM looks forward to continue working with you and your community in representing the municipal voice at the federal level.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM) response indicates that they have categorized the resolution as "Category D." According to *FCM Procedures for Resolutions*, Category D resolutions are defined as follows:

this category contains resolutions on issues dealt with by FCM in the previous three (3) years or that are in accordance with FCM's standing policy and advocacy priorities. These resolutions will be received by the Board of Directors for information only. FCM staff is authorized to inform a sponsoring local government or affiliate member that its resolution will be categorized as "D".

Based on this categorization, FCM is already advocating for the return of the municipal officer's expense allowance. RMA is aware of a guide developed by FCM titled *Change in "One-Third" Federal Tax Exemption for Elected Officials: A Guide for Canadian Municipalities* that is intended to support municipalities in understanding the implications of the change and considering various options for addressing the elimination of the exemption, including increasing elected official salaries and expanding expense policies. However, RMA is not aware of the specific direct advocacy efforts FCM has undertaken to oppose the exemption and is awaiting clarification from FCM on what the actions are. As a result, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Principle** and will be re-evaluated based on further information on FCM's advocacy efforts.

Resolution 9-19S

Watershed Planning and Advisory Council Funding

Northern Sunrise County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Parks**

WHEREAS Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) are independent, multi-stakeholder, non-profit organizations that are designated by Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP), under the Water for Life Strategy, to report on the health of watersheds, lead collaborative planning, and facilitate education and stewardship activities; and

WHEREAS WPACs rely on government funding to hire staff to provide new or ongoing extension and education programs to stakeholders at a grass roots level starting during the first quarter of the WPACs' fiscal year; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta's fiscal year is April 1 until March 31; and

WHEREAS the receipt of WPAC grants are irregular and delinquent, therefore threatening the employment of professional staff and the delivery of extension and educational programs;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to provide Watershed Planning and Advisory Council funding annually before May 1 to assure that professional staff can be retained to deliver extension and education programs, as well as examine the advantages of a three-year funding model for these.

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Parks

Watershed planning and advisory councils (WPACs) are important partners that directly support the goals of Alberta's Water for Life strategy. Funded largely by annual Government of Alberta grants, the WPACs have made significant contributions to regional plans, water management frameworks, research programs, policy development, and local stewardship projects.

Alberta Environment and Parks is working to further improve the grant application and decision-making processes and provide timely status updates to applicants. The Government of Alberta recently approved interim grant allocations totalling \$1.1 million to maintain continuity of the WPACs' operations until the provincial budget is passed this fall. The Government of Alberta looks forward to our continued work with WPACs and other key stakeholders to address water quality and quantity challenges in Alberta.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

As indicated in the Government of Alberta response, \$1.1 million dollars was approved to maintain the continuity of the WPAC's operations until the provincial budget was passed this fall. In the 2019 Budget, the Government of Alberta decreased Water for Life funding to \$43 million dollars.

RMA is pleased by the commitment from Alberta Environment and Parks that they are working to further improve the grant application process, decision-making processes and to provide timely-status updates to applicants, however, the intent of the resolution is not addressed by the government's response. This

resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to work with the Government of Alberta to fulfil the intent of this resolution and update members on the governments progress.

Resolution 10-19S

Strategic Direction for the RMA

RMA Executive

Carried

▶ ***Advocacy Target: Rural Municipalities of Alberta***

WHEREAS the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) is a member-driven organization; and

WHEREAS setting strategic direction is an important process in establishing a clear picture of organizational expectations in serving members and clients; and

WHEREAS a member-approved strategic direction will guide the RMA Board of Directors and staff in developing a strategic plan in which association activities will align with strategic priorities; and

WHEREAS the RMA's previous strategic direction expired in 2018;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) adopts the Strategic Direction as presented at the Spring 2019 Convention to guide planning and activities for the organization from 2019 through 2022;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA review the Strategic Direction in 2023.

Government Response

RMA has adopted its Strategic Direction as presented at the Spring 2019 convention and will next review the Strategic Direction in 2023.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 11-19S

Update of the Provincial Code of Practice for Compost Facilities

Wheatland County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Parks**

WHEREAS rural municipalities recognize the benefit of well-managed compost facilities as a necessary and useful component of waste management; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta, through the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*, *Waste Control Regulation*, and Code of Practice for Compost Facilities, has the authority and responsibility to oversee compost facility activities; and

WHEREAS the current Code of Practice for Compost Facilities was adopted in 1997 with intended review every five years beginning in 2001; and

WHEREAS the Standards for Composting Facilities in Alberta were published in 2007; and

WHEREAS anecdotal evidence from Alberta Environment and Parks suggests that the Standards for Composting Facilities in Alberta was intended as an update to the current Code of Practice for Compost Facilities but did not receive the priority required to bring the update into force; and

WHEREAS the current Code of Practice for Compost Facilities is legally enforceable by Alberta Environment and Parks while the Standards for Composting Facilities in Alberta are not; and

WHEREAS the Standards for Composting Facilities in Alberta contain many requirements that exceed those in the Code of Practice for Compost Facilities; and

WHEREAS in some cases the requirements written in the Standards for Composting Facilities in Alberta would better address the concerns of rural municipalities and their residents related to off-site impacts of compost facilities; and

WHEREAS as more municipalities in Alberta are implementing an organic collection program, composting facilities will likely increase in number and be sited close to communities; and

WHEREAS updating the Code of Practice for Compost Facilities would be a proactive approach that would help municipalities with siting these operations and minimize their community impacts;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to update the Code of Practice for Compost Facilities to reflect, at a minimum, the Standards for Composting Facilities in Alberta.

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Parks

The Government of Alberta is committed to protecting the environment and reducing the amount of waste, including compostable waste, sent to landfills. The Government of Alberta is continually looking for opportunities

and innovations that will improve its composting efforts, so Alberta will continue to listen to stakeholders and study best practices to ensure we are creating a solution that benefits all Albertans.

Alberta Environment and Parks understands that composting and waste reduction is an important issue, and the province is committed to working with municipalities to resolve issues surrounding composting and compost facilities. The province will continue to manage and monitor composting facilities across Alberta, as outlined under the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA appreciates the commitment from Alberta Environment and Parks to work with municipalities to resolve issues surrounding composting and compost facilities. However, the resolution requests the Government of Alberta to update the Code of Practice for Compost Facilities to reflect, at minimum, the Standards for Composting Facilities in Alberta.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to work with the Government of Alberta to fulfill the intent of this resolution.

Resolution 12-19S

Making Children's Healthcare a Priority in Alberta

MD of Opportunity

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Health**

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has budgeted \$22.1 billion on healthcare in 2019, representing almost 40 percent of total budget expenditures and an increase of 2.2 percent compared to the previous year's health budget; and

WHEREAS Alberta's population is experiencing a high natural growth rate and twenty-five percent of the province's population is below the age of 18; and

WHEREAS by 2041 the annual number of births in Alberta is expected to grow by 26 percent; and

WHEREAS children's health care is unique and requires a different approach than adult care given that children are particularly vulnerable to illnesses and infections, many of which can have lifelong ramifications if not properly treated; and

WHEREAS only two out of 106 acute care hospitals in Alberta are dedicated to children's health; and

WHEREAS treating children close to home has proven health benefits and can help bend the cost-curve on the overall health expenditures for the Government of Alberta; and

WHEREAS the Stollery Children's Hospital and Alberta Children's Hospital treat children from across the province (and beyond) and are able to leverage world-class physicians and technology to support treatment of children in health facilities across Alberta;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that the Government of Alberta make all aspects of children's health care a priority by making excellent pediatric care accessible to all Alberta children, regardless of where they live;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA request that the Government of Alberta support enhancements to existing infrastructure and programming in order to provide an increased level of care to children and recognize that the Stollery Children's Hospital and the Alberta Children's Hospital serve as critical hubs to this network of care for children's health across the province.

Government Response

Alberta Health

Alberta Health will continue to work with our health and community partners to deliver programs and supports that make a positive difference for children and families in our province.

The Stollery Children's Hospital and the Alberta Children's Hospital are renowned centres of excellence in pediatric care and act as the hubs to support children's health throughout Alberta, as well as Manitoba, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, and Yukon. In 2018 and 2019, there was a combined 16,600 admissions to these pediatric centres of excellence. Both hospitals have world class Pediatric Intensive Care Units for pediatric patients across Alberta. On May 22, 2019, the new \$11.7 million Stollery Pediatric Intensive Care Unit opened, demonstrating the government's commitment to supporting children and families through critical times of illness and trauma.

Alberta Health Services is increasing mental health services to rural and remote communities by using telehealth to offer services such as child psychiatry, in combination with local community mental health staff. Alberta Health is collaborating with the Canadian Mental Health Association to improve community-led mental health supports in rural areas through Rural Action Plans.

Twenty-four of Alberta's 41 Primary Care Networks have dedicated programs within their business plan that cater specifically to infants, toddlers, children, and adolescents. Technology, such as remote patient monitoring, is making it easier to support children outside of our hospital facilities. Regional clinics and programs also provide essential local supports and take referrals from our centres of excellence so children can continue to thrive at home and in their communities.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Alberta Health response affirms ongoing support for the Stollery Children's Hospital, including new funding for a pediatric intensive care unit. Their response also highlights increased funding for mental health services in rural areas including child psychiatry. This additional funding for children's mental health care is welcome; RMA will continue to monitor how these services will be accessed by rural Albertans. The Alberta Health response closes by outlining existing children's healthcare services available through the Primary Care Network, which has offices in rural Alberta, however 16 of the 41 offices are in the Edmonton or Calgary regions. RMA assigns this resolution the status of **Accepted in Part**, and will continue to advocate for access to children's healthcare in rural Alberta.

Section 2: Advocacy Report Card

The following table is a summary of RMA’s current resolutions excluding the resolutions adopted in fall 2018, which are detailed in Section 1. Recent developments on the resolutions are detailed below in the corresponding categories, and readers are reminded that although resolution statuses may remain unchanged, work on each resolution is ongoing. Each resolution has a three-year lifespan to reflect the nature of shifting government policy development and timelines associated with legislative changes and implementation.

Resolutions at a Glance

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
AGRICULTURE		
19-18F	Separation of Industrial Hemp from Cannabis Regulations	Accepted
4-18S	Support for Continuation of Grant Funding for Agricultural Initiatives Program	Intent Not Met
8-17F	Provincial Communications Plan for Farm Workplace Legislation	Intent Not Met
ER2-17F	Continued Provincial Funding Support for Agriculture Service Boards and Agricultural Societies	Accepted
7-17S	Eradication of Bovine Tuberculosis and Brucellosis Prevalent in Bison Within and Surrounding Wood Buffalo National Park	Intent Not Met
BROADBAND AND CONNECTIVITY		
3-18F	Federal and Provincial Funding of Municipal Broadband Projects	Accepted in Part
4-18F	Enabling High-Speed Internet Access for Rural Alberta	Intent Not Met
13-18F	TELUS Failure to Maintain Landline Operations	Incomplete Information
3-17S	National Broadband Strategy	Accepted in Part
COMMUNITY SERVICES		
10-18F	Community Peace Officer Access to the Canadian Police Information Centre	Intent Not Met

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
21-18F	Scrap Metal (Copper) Theft	Accepted in Part
24-18F	Review of Education Funding Formula	Accepted in Principle
10-17S	Modernization of Alberta Registry Agents	Accepted in Part
EMERGENCY SERVICES		
12-17F	Specialized Clinical Counselling and Therapy for Distressed Emergency First Responders	Accepted in Principle
18-17F	Integrate Emergency Social Services into Emergency Management at Provincial Level	Accepted
ENERGY		
5-18F	Alberta Energy Regulator Requirements for Acquiring and Holding Energy Licences and Approval	Intent Not Met
12-18F	Multi-Stakeholder Committee to Work at Reducing the Use of Potable Water by the Oil and Gas Industry in Alberta	Intent Not Met
14-18F	Reclamation of Non-Producing Oil and Gas Sites on Agricultural Lands Owned by Bankrupt Companies	Intent Not Met
16-18F	Demand Meters and Rate Riders	Intent Not Met
6-18S	Wind Energy Regulations Required at Provincial Level	Intent Not Met
10-18S	Tenure Extension Requirements for Unconventional Development	Intent Not Met
5-17F	Alberta Energy Regulator – Amendment to Transfer Approval Process	Intent Not Met
10-17F	Provincial Industry-led Methane Flaring Strategy	Accepted in Principle
6-17F	Financial Support from AAMDC for Appeal of Virginia Hills/Dolomite Decision	Accepted
5-17S	Secure Access to Natural Gas Pipelines	Intent Not Met

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
ENVIRONMENT		
7-18F	Municipal and Privately-Owned Protected Areas Inventory	Intent Not Met
9-18F	Impact of the Alberta Wetland Policy on the Cost of Maintaining Public Road Infrastructure	Intent Not Met
11-18F	Rural Municipalities of Alberta Represents Municipalities on <i>Water Act</i> Approvals	Intent Not Met
15-18F	Wetland Mitigation Directive – Restoration and Compensation	Accepted
17-18F	Alberta Environment and Parks Additional Resources for <i>Water Act</i> Approvals	Intent Not Met
20-18F	Decommissioning Costs for Wind Energy Developments	Accepted
22-18F	Amendment to the Wildlife Regulations Regarding Cougars	Intent Not Met
8-18S	Amendments Required for Provincial Recycling Regulations	Intent Not Met
9-18S	Exemption of Seniors Housing from Requirement to Pay Carbon Levy	Accepted in Part
11-18S	Recycling of Solar Panels	Intent Not Met
2-17F	Completion of Alberta’s Land-use Framework Prior to Establishment of Conservation and Protected Areas for Species at Risk	Accepted in Principle
3-17F	Municipal Action on Caribou Recovery Planning	Intent Not Met
4-17F	<i>Water Act</i> Approvals for Municipal Projects on Municipal Land	Intent Not Met
1-17S	Carbon Levy Exemption of Natural Gas and Propane for All Food Production Uses	Accepted
6-17S	Addendum to the <i>Species at Risk Act</i>	Incomplete Information
9-17S	Legal Opinion for Species at Risk Proposed Policies	Accepted in Principle
HEALTH & SENIORS		
8-18F	Restricting the Consumption of Cannabis based on Regulations for Liquor Consumption	Intent Not Met

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
14-17F	<i>Cannabis Act</i>	Intent Not Met
INDUSTRY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT		
ER1-17F	Support for Trans Mountain Expansion Project	Accepted in Principle
MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE		
2-18F	Annual Release Date of Assessment Year Modifiers	Intent Not Met
6-18F	Securing Municipal Property Taxes in the Event of Bankruptcy or Insolvency	Intent Not Met
1-18S	Request for Implementation of the 2018 Assessment Year Modifier for Well and Pipeline Assessments	Intent Not Met
1-17F	Centralization of Industrial Properties Assessment	Intent Not Met
2-17S	Amendments to Section 348 of the <i>Municipal Government Act</i>	Intent Not Met
4-17S	Collection of Outstanding Taxes for Education Requisitions From the Province of Alberta	Accepted
8-17S	Oldman River Regional Services Commission Regional Planning Funding	Intent Not Met
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT		
18-18F	Utility Conflict in Municipal Right of Ways	Intent Not Met
7-18S	Standards for Property Contaminated by Fentanyl and Carfentanil	Accepted in Principle
19-17F	Builder Licensing Program Impacts	Intent Not Met
POLICING AND RURAL CRIME		
2-18S	Combatting Rural Crime	Accepted in Part
3-18S	Increase Crown Prosecutor Staffing Levels for Rural Municipalities	Accepted in Principle
12-18S	Victim Services Units Funding	Accepted in Part

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
<i>TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</i>		
1-18F	Provincial Contribution to Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program	Intent Not Met
11-17S	Review of Standard Practices for Installation of High Tension Cable Barriers on Two-Lane Provincial Highways	Intent Not Met
<i>OTHER</i>		
23-18F	Social Well-Being of An Employee and Domestic Violence – Occupational Health and Safety Act	Accepted in Part
5-18S	Provincial Government Consultation and Communication Protocol with Municipalities	Intent Not Met
9-17F	AAMDC Refusal to Engage in Exploratory Discussion to Merge with AUMA	Accepted
13-17F	AAMDC Advisory Committee to Support the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission in Reviewing Charitable Gaming in Alberta	Accepted
15-17F	Stopping the Implementation of Proposed Federal Tax Reforms	Accepted in Part
ER3-17F	Effective Representation for Rural Albertans in Alberta’s Legislative Assembly	Intent Not Met

AGRICULTURE

Resolution 19-18F

Separation of Industrial Hemp from Cannabis Regulations

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to classify industrial hemp as an agriculture product.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates the clarification of jurisdiction from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. Given that there is no provincial regulation or Act limiting industrial hemp production, reclassifying industrial hemp at a provincial level is unnecessary in Alberta if a producer is approved federally through the *Cannabis Act*.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 4-18S

Support for Continuation of Grant Funding for Agricultural Initiatives Program

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to re-instate or replace the Agriculture Initiatives Program funding for local agricultural societies.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA recognizes the fiscal challenges faced by the Government of Alberta and is encouraged by the three-year funding commitment to agriculture societies in Alberta and the eligibility of agriculture societies under the Community Facility Enhancement Program and Community Initiatives Program. However, these grants were previously available, require agriculture societies to compete for funding with other non-profit organizations, and do not adequately substitute for the loss of the Agriculture Initiatives Program (AIP), which was specifically available for capital funding for agriculture societies. Therefore, the resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 8-17F

Provincial Communications Plan for Farm Workplace Legislation

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties request that the Government of Alberta develop and implement a communications plan to advise Alberta's agriculture sector of actual and intended changes regarding workplace legislation, with the outcome of establishing increased awareness and effective change management.

DEVELOPMENTS: The *Farm Freedom and Safety Act* (FFSA) received royal assent on December 5, 2019. The FFSA replaces the *Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act*, the original

legislation which was the subject of this resolution. The Government of Alberta webpage contains highlights of the new legislation, however it does not contain information on a communications plan. As a result, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**. RMA will monitor the communication of the requirements under the new legislation.

Resolution ER2-17F

Continued Provincial Funding Support for Agriculture Service Boards and Agricultural Societies

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties strongly encourage the continued financial support through the Alberta Lottery program or a similar program for agriculture service boards and agricultural societies beyond 2017-2018.

DEVELOPMENTS: As announced at the RMA 2018 Spring Convention, agriculture service boards and agricultural societies will see a three-year funding commitment starting in the provincial budget 2018-19. The 2019-20 budget maintains the previous funding commitment. This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 7-17S

Eradication of Bovine Tuberculosis and Brucellosis Prevalent in Bison Within and Surrounding Wood Buffalo National Park

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties supports the depopulation of diseased bison as the only effective tool to successfully eradicate the threat of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis from within and surrounding Wood Buffalo National Park; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties urge Alberta Agriculture and Forestry and Parks Canada to develop an effective measurable plan to successfully eradicate all diseased bison from within and surrounding Wood Buffalo National Park in order to prevent further disease outbreaks province-wide; that would inevitably have adverse effects for the national, provincial and local domestic cattle and beef industries.

DEVELOPMENTS: This resolution specifically calls for the depopulation of diseased bison to eradicate the threat of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis in the Wood Buffalo National Park area; however, responses from the provincial and federal governments do not indicate support for this level of action. Both the provincial and federal governments do indicate that continued effort is needed to understand the risk of transmission, and note that this will involve consultation and engagement with multiple stakeholders.

Until such time that a formal consultation process is initialized to develop a strategy to address the eradication of diseased bison from the Wood Buffalo National Park area that would prevent further outbreaks, this resolution holds a status of **Intent Not Met**.

BROADBAND AND CONNECTIVITY

Resolution 3-18F

Federal and Provincial Funding of Municipal Broadband Projects

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the governments of Alberta and Canada to provide direct funding to municipalities to support rural, remote and northern communities' development of high speed (50 megabits per second and faster) community broadband, with federal government grants matching municipal and provincial investment in broadband network infrastructure.

DEVELOPMENTS: Regarding provincial funding, RMA appreciated the efforts of Service Alberta to develop a long-term strategy for Albertans accessing high speed internet. However, there is not a budget commitment to fund rural broadband.

The response from the CRTC indicates that municipalities are eligible to receive funding from the Broadband Fund if they, or a partner, meet the applicant eligibility requirements. RMA understands that this will allow municipalities who can meet the eligibility requirements on their own will not need to partner with an ISP, in addition to all municipalities having the option to apply for funding if they partner with an experienced ISP.

The Government of Canada has announced their plan to provide high speed internet to all Canadians by 2030. This plan is supported by a proposed budget announcement of \$1.7 billion in new funding, with an additional \$1 billion in financing to be made available from the Canada Infrastructure Bank. \$750 million over five years has been allocated to the Broadband Fund, with the funding for years four and five contingent on a review of the fund in year three (2021). RMA is pleased to see a funding commitment made to provide broadband internet access in rural and remote areas.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part** and will be monitored for additional funding announcements and details of the existing federal budgetary announcement.

Resolution 4-18F

Enabling High-Speed Internet Access for Rural Alberta

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) urge the Government of Alberta to deliver a comprehensive rural broadband strategy that realizes the path forward for all residents of rural Alberta to achieve the CRTC's universal service objective targets of 50 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload for fixed broadband services; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA emphasize to the Government of Alberta that, for economic, political, and social concerns, the completed strategy should be made available to the public in the shortest possible time; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that such a strategy should include the following components to best serve the interests of rural Albertans and to facilitate the effective implementation of the strategy in pursuit of its goals.

- I. That the Government of Alberta should mandate (where legally permissible) and advocate for (where not within the scope of their authority) common carrier/shared access laws to allow for the more efficient deployment of infrastructure.
- II. That the Government of Alberta should incent partnerships and cooperation between municipalities, the Province, and private industry to develop rural broadband infrastructure, providing matching funds for qualified infrastructure deployments.
- III. That the Government of Alberta should enable significantly more affordable access to the Supernet for Albertans, through their relationship with Bell Canada, to provide backhaul access for local network solutions.
- IV. That the strategy should enhance competitive access to the broadband industry in Alberta for more businesses and should promote an increasingly competitive business environment.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates the consultation on a provincial broadband policy and the Government of Alberta's willingness to advocate to their federal counterparts. However, there is not yet a publicly available provincial broadband strategy or draft.

RMA is pleased with an acknowledgement of wholesale and backhaul services available for purchase in SuperNet communities, however the cost of accessing these services is not addressed in Service Alberta's response.

As a result of a lack of publicly available provincial broadband strategy or draft, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**. As policies change the status of this resolution will be monitored.

Resolution 13-18F

TELUS Failure to Maintain Landline Operations

Status: Incomplete Information

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that Service Alberta direct TELUS to maintain their complete landline network until such time that there are assurances that the wireless system is as secure, economical and stable as the previous landline system has been; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA request that the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) review the original agreement with TELUS to ensure they are meeting their responsibilities.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA has not yet received a response to this resolution from the CRTC.

RMA appreciates the response from Service Alberta and their offer to discuss maintenance of the landline network with TELUS. RMA will contact ISED regarding this issue.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Incomplete Information** and will continue to advocate on this issue.

Resolution 3-17S

National Broadband Strategy

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) request that the governments of Alberta and Canada declare broadband an essential service; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the AAMDC request that the governments of Alberta and Canada provide direct funding and support to rural, remote and northern communities to ensure affordable access to, or the development of, high speed (100 Mbps and faster) community network infrastructure; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the AAMDC urge the Government of Canada to develop a national broadband strategy; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that rural municipalities, internet service providers, education and health professionals, public safety organizations, and research and economic development authorities be actively involved in preparing the National Broadband Strategy.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates broad support of the resolution's call for increased action on the part of government and industry in enhancing rural broadband availability and quality. RMA is pleased with the direction that the Government of Alberta has taken to this point in prioritizing rural final mile connectivity in their development of a new SuperNet operating agreement. The Government of Alberta is currently in the process of developing a rural broadband strategy, and has convened an inter-ministerial working group to do so. In early 2018, RMA assisted Service Alberta in promoting a survey to members to gather baseline information on rural broadband service delivery. In the fall of 2018, Service Alberta gathered feedback from the RMA Board of Directors on the broadband strategy, including the strategy's scope, implementation, oversight, and priority areas. Service Alberta also provide an update on the strategy to RMA members at the Fall 2018 RMA Convention. Service Alberta has indicated that formal information on the strategy will be released in early 2019, but at this point it has not yet been released.

At the federal level, RMA is pleased with the 2016 Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) policy that declared broadband as a basic telecommunications service, which is the telecommunications equivalent of an essential service, and empowers the CRTC to implement programs, policies, regulations and initiatives to improve broadband in underserved areas. One such initiative being undertaken in relation to the basic service declaration is a \$750 million fund to enhance broadband in rural areas, to be funded by

industry. CRTC released details on the fund in fall 2018, and is now accepting its second round of funding applications. The fund will include an option for municipalities to apply for direct funding if they meet the eligibility requirements, including experience operating a broadband network. While this funding is welcome, the minimum speeds it seeks to achieve (50mbps download) is less than those called for in this resolution.

A second aspect of the CRTC's declaration of broadband as a basic service was to increase the threshold for underserved areas from those with service below 5mbps download / 1mbps upload to 50mbps download / 10mbps upload. In their 2018 budget, the Government of Canada also announced that \$100 million over five years has been dedicated to the Strategic Innovation Fund, will mainly be used to advanced low earth orbit satellite technology to improve broadband service in rural and remote communities. Further, the 2019 Government of Canada budget allocates \$1.7 billion in new funding with the goal of all Canadians having access to 50mbps download and 10mbps upload speeds by 2030.

In July 2019, the Government of Canada released a national broadband strategy. The strategy addresses the connectivity gap rural communities face and includes information on how this will be addressed.

RMA welcomes the national broadband strategy, the Broadband Fund, and the basic service declaration. However, the speeds funded by the Broadband Fund are less than those called for in this resolution. Therefore, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part**. RMA will continue to advocate to Service Alberta for continued progress on a provincial broadband strategy.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Resolution 10-18F

Community Peace Officer Access to the Canadian Police Information Centre

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that Alberta Justice and Solicitor General work with the Canadian Police Information Centre, and any other Ministry necessary, to provide direct, mobile and timely Canadian Police Information Centre access to Community Peace Officers that can be used as a proactive and preventative tool within defined guidelines.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates an ongoing collaborative effort between the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General and other organizations to ensure that community peace officers (CPOs) have adequate access to Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC). The short-term commitment of five-minute processing time through Sheriffs Operations Control Centres and the long-term commitment enabling direct access through in-car laptops to eligible CPIC officers is encouraging.

In addition to the resolution response, RMA has learned that Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Alberta Association of Community Peace Officers have jointly requested that CPO access to CPIC be facilitated through the Provincial Radio Control Centre (PRCC), which is under the jurisdiction of Service Alberta. RMA has formally supported this request. As of December 2019, RMA has learned that the process for facilitation of CPO access to CPIC has stalled, and access through the PRCC is not likely to occur, although the organizations mentioned above are still discussing potential options to facilitate access.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and will be updated when direct CPO access to CPIC commences.

Resolution 21-18F

Scrap Metal (Copper) Theft

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to proclaim the *Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act* and create the regulation to assist with the deterrence of copper theft and other scrap metal.

DEVELOPMENTS: The initial Government of Alberta response indicated that action was being taken on scrap metal theft in the form of a cross-ministry working group that would review the *Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act* as well as other potential options for addressing copper theft.

On November 5, 2019, Alberta’s Lieutenant Governor proclaimed the *Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act* into force. The Act includes an immediate requirement for scrap metal dealers and recyclers to report suspected stolen property to authorities. Regulations outlining requirements on dealers and recyclers to obtain proof of identification from sellers, record and retain details of transactions and share information with law enforcement are expected to be in place by spring 2020.

RMA is pleased with the Government of Alberta’s progress on this issue. The resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part** pending the implementation of an accompanying regulation.

Resolution 24-18F

Review of Education Funding Formula

Status: Accepted in Principle

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta supports the Alberta School Boards Association position that the Government of Alberta review the K-12 funding formula for schools and school boards.

DEVELOPMENTS: In budget 2019, the Government of Alberta committed to reviewing and replacing the current education funding formula with a new “K-12 Assurance and Funding Framework” that will come into effect in September 2020 for the 2020-21 school year. The transition to the new Framework is based on a recommendation earlier in 2019 from the *Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta’s Finances* which called for a shift in education funding to “provide incentives for sharing services and achieving better student outcomes.” According to the Government of Alberta’s 2019-23 Fiscal Plan, the new Framework will, among other things, “assure the long-term viability of rural schools.”

At this point, RMA looks forward to providing input into the review related to the importance of moving away from a strict enrollment-based model to better support rural schools with low enrollments. This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Principle** pending the commencement and outcome of the review.

Resolution 10-17S

Modernization of Alberta Registry Agents

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties request that the Government of Alberta recognize the vital role of Alberta registry agents in the delivery of essential government services to all Albertans; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Alberta recognize the positive impact in rural Alberta communities, and work to strengthen their partnership with the Association of Alberta Registry Agents and local municipalities by:

- **Supporting the modernization of the registry agent industry;**
- **Expanding existing online services directly to Albertans through registry agents; and**
- **Ensuring the long-term sustainability of rural registry agents, including a fair and equitable fee model.**

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response includes recognition of the vital role that registry agents play in supporting the quality of life of Albertans.

RMA appreciates the Government of Alberta's prioritization of maintaining access to in-person registry services during any modernization process. In a March 2018 meeting with RMA, the Minister of Service Alberta explained that from the Government of Alberta's perspective, the resolution's request to allow specific registry agents to provide online services was impractical and would lead to prohibitively high registry fees. According to the Minister, the current system in which online services are centrally managed by the Government of Alberta and the Alberta Association of Registry Agents is the system best-suited to support the sustainability of independent registry agents in providing in-person services, while keeping registry fees manageable for Albertans.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part**, and RMA will continue to advocate on this issue.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Resolution 12-17F

Specialized Clinical Counselling and Therapy for Distressed Emergency First Responders

Status: Accepted in Principle

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties strongly encourages the Government of Alberta to create and staff a governmental unit capable of providing specialized clinical counselling and therapy for distressed emergency first responders capable of servicing and travelling to all regions of the Province.

DEVELOPMENTS: The overall Government of Alberta response indicates a wide range of existing preventative and post-incident mental health support systems for emergency first responders, as well as ongoing activities to enhance and broaden such services in the wake of first responders' roles in responding to recent natural disasters in Alberta.

The Alberta Health response indicates a current initiative to deliver regional reintegration training for paramedics suffering psychological injuries with the goal of supporting their return to work. Similarly, the Alberta Municipal Affairs response indicates an effort to improve the coordination and accessibility of multiple separate programs supporting the mental health of first responders. These examples both align with the intent of the resolution, which is to centralize mental health supports for first responders under a single "governmental unit" with the capability to provide such services in all regions of the province. RMA is also pleased by the Government of Alberta's December 2018 announcement of an emergency medical services (EMS) action plan, which includes one million dollars in funding to support the mental health of EMS workers.

RMA appreciates the efforts of the Government of Alberta in supporting the mental health of first responders. As the government response reflects elements of the centralized, mobile unit requested in the operative clause, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Principle**, and RMA will follow up with Alberta Health and Municipal Affairs to determine whether the changes references will meaningfully improve the integration and mobility of first responder mental health support services.

RMA is also pleased by the Government of Canada's recent announcement of a \$29 million plan to address mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder in emergency personnel, including \$10 million for an "internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy pilot" to improve access to care for emergency personnel. RMA looks forward to learning more about the details of this program and how it will support emergency first responders operating in rural areas.

Resolution 18-17F

Integrate Emergency Social Services into Emergency Management at Provincial Level

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties urge the Government of Alberta to consolidate emergency social services and emergency management into a single government ministry with a single emergency coordination centre to eliminate duplication and enhance coordination of provincial support to local authorities.

DEVELOPMENTS: The government response indicates that in response to challenges responding to disasters in 2013 and 2016, the Government of Alberta has recently integrated emergency social services into the broader Provincial Operations Centre to better coordinate immediate emergency management with the provision of emergency social services. Based on this response, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted**.

Additionally, RMA is pleased by the Government of Alberta's announcement of integration of Alberta Emergency Alert with a new national emergency alert system, which will further improve the efficiency by which first responders and the public can become aware of emergency situations.

ENERGY

Resolution 5-18F

Alberta Energy Regulator Requirements for Acquiring and Holding Energy Licences and Approval

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate that the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) be required to ensure that there are no outstanding municipal property taxes before licenses are transferred, including licensed properties declared as “Orphan Sites”; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that outstanding property taxes form part of the liability rating for oil and gas companies; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that oil and gas companies be required to post deposits in the amount of all outstanding municipal property taxes before they can apply for a license or transfer, and that these deposits are forwarded to the municipality from the AER upon the approval of the license or transfer.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that although many factors are considered during the process of reviewing and approving a license transfer and within the AER’s liability management rating (LMR), payment of municipal property taxes is not among them. RMA appreciates that Alberta Energy is working to improve the LMR and overall liability management system and is considering input from RMA and Alberta Municipal Affairs related to the extent to which outstanding municipal taxes should be considered part of a company’s LMR. In 2019, the Government of Alberta announced they were seeking advice and input from stakeholders and the public on ways to improve the AER. RMA board members were invited to an in-person stakeholder workshop with other municipal leaders to discuss areas of improvement with the AER’s mandate and systems operations. One comment RMA put forward was rural municipalities are facing significant issues surrounding the transfer of assets. Under AER’s Directive 006, a company that sells assets or becomes insolvent must submit an application to the AER. However, this process does not inform municipalities of a change in asset ownership, often resulting in municipalities being unable to recover unpaid property taxes from the previous owner. The committee noted RMA’s comment and RMA is currently waiting to hear back from the government with the recommendations and changes from the consultation process. However, as rural municipalities are faced with mounting unpaid taxes related to oil and gas infrastructure, this issue must be addressed urgently.

RMA is also concerned with AER’s comments that imposing conditions on license transfers due to unpaid municipal taxes is beyond their jurisdiction, while also encouraging municipalities to intervene in the transfer approval process due to unpaid taxes. Based on the response, it is unclear what purpose this would serve, as it appears that AER could not alter the transfer approval process due to unpaid municipal taxes.

According to a 2019 RMA survey, rural municipalities are currently facing a deficit of between \$81 million and \$96 million in unpaid property taxes from the oil and gas industry. Based on the Government of Alberta response, there are no current provisions available in the transfer approval and liability management systems to address unpaid municipal taxes, and limited interest in expanding either process to do so. Given that lack of payment of municipal taxes is often a sign of financial distress for companies, and may lead to further abandonment of other commitments, RMA urges the Government of Alberta to include this within the scope of the AER (as they are the primary oversight body for oil and gas operations in the province).

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to advocate on this issue.

Resolution 12-18F

Multi-Stakeholder Committee to Work at Reducing the Use of Potable Water by the Oil and Gas Industry in Alberta

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to immediately strike a multi-stakeholder committee to work at reducing the use of potable water and explore alternate options for use by the oil and gas industry in Alberta.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response provides a detailed overview of current water use by the oil and gas industry, as well as current legislation, policies and initiatives in place to conserve water usage and reclaim water used by industry. While this information is encouraging, it does not address the intent of the resolution to form a committee and the larger underlying fact that RMA members believe more can be done to reduce industrial water use.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**, and will continue to advocate for the formation of a committee on this issue.

Resolution 14-18F

Reclamation of Non-Producing Oil and Gas Sites on Agricultural Lands Owned by Bankrupt Companies

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Orphan Well Association prioritize the reclamation of abandoned oil and gas sites on the following basis:

- 1. Health, safety and environmental needs**
- 2. Agricultural land**
- 3. All other lands**

DEVELOPMENTS: The response by the Government of Alberta indicates that public safety and environmental protection are priorities in the reclamation of oil and gas wells, although the

actual prioritization process is completed by the Orphan Well Association (OWA). The OWA has released an update on how the reclamation process of abandoned oil and gas sites is conducted. Phase 1 of the Assessment is to identify any potential concerns that may warrant further investigation. Phase 2 of the Assessment involves soil and ground water samples to be collected and sent to a laboratory for analysis. If any soil or groundwater is contaminated, it will be a priority for reclamation. RMA has assigned this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**, as the OWA reclamation process does not consider the type of land being impacted or provide any priority rating to agricultural lands. RMA will continue to monitor the progress of the OWA reclamation process of abandoned oil and gas wells.

Resolution 16-18F

Demand Meters and Rate Riders

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Alberta Utilities Commission create a separate rate class for municipal buildings and recreational facilities and require that all demand meters are reset and billed accordingly on a monthly basis.

DEVELOPMENTS: Based on this resolution, the RMA was contacted about participating Electric System Distribution Inquiry and the RMA has submitted their intention to provide input during this process. Currently, the RMA is awaiting additional information regarding phase II proceedings and will bring the intent of this resolution forward at this time. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 6-18S

Wind Energy Regulations Required at Provincial Level

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request the Government of Alberta to undertake the creation of a Renewable Energy Division within the AER to approve, regulate, and enforce the responsible development, reclamation, and assessment of renewable energy projects in the Province of Alberta;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that renewable energy projects formally proceeding into the review and approval stage of the above-noted Renewable Energy Division are to be corporately approved and construction ready projects, not speculative or conditional in any way;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA request the Government of Alberta to set up and enforce the collection of monetary funds towards the implementation of an Orphan Renewable Energy Fund to oversee potential future reclamation of abandoned renewable energy sites.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA recognizes the important work that has been undertaken to improve the regulatory process for wind energy projects and other renewable energy projects, and RMA

appreciates the opportunity to be involved in many of these important discussions such as the creation of an updated reclamation standard for renewable energy.

Although this resolution speaks to the creation of an approving and regulating body within the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER), the broader intent of this resolution is the responsible regulation of Alberta's renewable energy resources and projects. Alberta Environment and Parks has amended the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation to include renewable energy operation as an activity requiring reclamation at end of life. Under the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation, security, such as cash, must be submitted by the operator to the Government of Alberta to account for reclamation costs. If an operator fails to comply with the Conservation and Reclamation Directive, then the security will be used for the reclamation at end of life for renewable resources. However, given the specific nature of this resolution and its focus on the creation of a fund for orphan renewable energy projects, it is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to work with members and the Government of Alberta to improve economic, social, and environmental outcomes for renewable energy.

Resolution 10-18S

Tenure Extension Requirements for Unconventional Development

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) requests the Government of Alberta review and examine tenure extension requirements for unconventional resource development, removing the need for industry to plan activities around securing tenure, and thereby allowing more orderly development and reduced impact on the environment.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta's response indicates some progress made from the from the area-based regulation pilot project that occurred in the MD of Greenview, but the intent of the resolution is not addressed through the pilot or other means, as the tenure system remains the same. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and the RMA will continue to work with the Government of Alberta to fulfill the intent of this resolution.

Resolution 6-17F

Financial Support from AAMDC for Appeal of Virginia Hills/Dolomite Decision

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, through financial resources, support Northern Sunrise County in the legal fees associated with this appeal in an act of solidarity as the overruling of this case is imperative for all municipalities that are owed taxes and outstanding penalties from insolvent organization.

DEVELOPMENTS: Through RMA's *Involvement in Member Legal Matters* policy, RMA provided financial support to Northern Sunrise County to appeal the court ruling referenced in this

resolution. In 2019, the RMA provided additional information and support to assist the appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. As such, this resolution is assigned the status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 10-17F

Provincial Industry-led Methane Flaring Strategy

Status: Accepted in Principle

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties advocate to the Government of Alberta to permit an industry-led approach to a reduction in methane emissions.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA recognizes the significance of methane as a greenhouse gas and the need to reduce methane emissions. The Government of Alberta has announced the introduction of the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction (TIER) system to manage emissions from large industries. The new system encourages industrial facilities to find innovative ways to reduce emissions and invest in clean technology to stay competitive. Methane and nitrous oxide (N₂O) emissions from either biomass combustion, fermentation or decomposition are included under TIER. RMA reassigns this resolution as **Accepted in Principle** as the TIER program will not be implemented until January 1, 2020. RMA will monitor the progress of the TIER program.

Resolution 5-17S

Secure Access to Natural Gas Pipelines

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, in conjunction with the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops and Gas Alberta, request the governments of Canada and Alberta to develop legislation and provide financial assistance to maintain certainty of access to natural gas pipelines for rural municipalities and gas co-ops in Alberta.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA recognizes the on-going funding to support the Rural Gas Program and although the Government of Alberta has challenged Gas Alberta and the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops to identify alternative funding options on the decommissioning of transmission pipelines, the response lacks commitments of additional funding or legislative changes. As such, the resolution is deemed **Intent Not Met**.

ENVIRONMENT

Resolution 7-18F

Municipal and Privately-Owned Protected Areas Inventory

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) urge the Government of Alberta to recognize municipal and privately-owned protected areas in their reporting towards Alberta's 17% protection of terrestrial areas and inland waters target if they satisfy international standards for protected areas or Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs); and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA partner with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association to compile an inventory of all municipal and privately-owned protected areas in Alberta, for the purpose of providing Alberta Environment and Parks with a complete inventory of candidate protected areas and OECMs, for their 2020 17% terrestrial areas and inland waters protection target.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA is encouraged by the Government of Alberta's recognition of the ecological and biodiversity benefits of municipal and privately-owned protected areas. RMA has been in contact with the Alberta Land Stewardship Centre which has an existing inventory of privately held conservation areas. This inventory does not include municipally held land which would be required to fulfill the intent of the resolution and may require significant RMA resources. RMA is considering how to proceed on this resolution, and the extent to which RMA members could be involved in the process, but the current status is **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 9-18F

Impact of the Alberta Wetland Policy on the Cost of Maintaining Public Road Infrastructure

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to modify the Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive to allow all wetland impacts as a result of municipal road maintenance or re-building of existing roads to utilize a one to one ratio, or D to D value wetland replacement; and/or consider exempting all wetland impacts in road right of ways that are smaller than one hectare in size.

DEVELOPMENTS: While RMA appreciates the initiatives identified in the Government of Alberta response intended to reduce wetland assessment study costs and better integrate wetland management systems, the resolution specifically requests policy changes to reduce municipal wetland restoration costs related to road maintenance or construction through the use of a one-to-one replacement ratio or exemption of wetland impacts in road right of ways smaller than one hectare in size. The Government of Alberta response does not address either of these requests, therefore this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 11-18F

Rural Municipalities of Alberta Represents Municipalities on *Water Act* Approvals

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta work with Alberta Environment and Parks to provide the rural perspective and input related to streamlining and improving the *Water Act* approval process.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) is in the process of enhancing the *Water Act* approval system to reduce approval times for activities regulated under the *Water Act*. Alberta Environment and Parks is currently developing a code of practice to reduce red tape and streamline the regulatory process by investing in IT, increasing the capacity of staff, and restructuring the risk management system by lifting the requirements on minor works orders and focusing regulation on high-risk projects. The Minister of Environment and Parks is open to working together with RMA to provide the rural perspective and improving the current *Water Act* approval process, although it is not clear in what capacity. RMA appreciates this offer, although this resolution is currently assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and will be updated based on future collaboration between AER and RMA on addressing *Water Act* approvals.

Resolution 15-18F

Wetland Mitigation Directive – Restoration and Compensation

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that Alberta Environment and Parks follow the Wetland Mitigation Directive and that permittee-responsible mitigation either through enhancement or construction of wetlands be allowed, be it either through the Alternative Land Use Services program or through wetlands constructed as a part of stormwater management ponds.

DEVELOPMENTS: Changes to the management of wetland replacement in Alberta allow for greater flexibility in how municipalities can work locally to replace disturbed wetlands. The Government of Alberta has created Alberta Guide to Wetland Construction in Stormwater Management Facilities, which provides guidance on wetland construction practices in stormwater management facilities based on scientific and practical knowledge and experience across Canada. This guide allows municipalities to apply wetlands constructed as part of a stormwater management system towards their wetland replacement obligations. As a result of the release of the guide, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 17-18F

Alberta Environment and Parks Additional Resources for *Water Act* Approvals

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to allocate sufficient financial resources to improve and streamline its *Water Act* approvals process and systems.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) is in the process of enhancing the *Water Act* approval system to reduce approval times for activities regulated under the *Water Act*. AEP is currently developing a code of practice to reduce red tape and streamline the regulatory process by investing in IT, increasing the capacity of staff, and restructuring the risk management system by lifting the requirements on minor works orders and focusing on more regulation on high-risk projects. The Minister has stated that these changes will help improve and streamline the *Water Act* approvals process and systems. Although new programs and systems are being introduced, the impact of this new processes on approval times is not known. Until noticeable changes to approval times are realized, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and the RMA will continue to raise this issue with AEP.

Resolution 20-18F

Decommissioning Costs for Wind Energy Developments

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request Alberta Energy to direct the Alberta Utilities Commission to establish a method of ensuring that there is funding in place to ensure that an abandoned wind energy plant is decommissioned and reclaimed in an environmentally responsible way.

DEVELOPMENTS: The RMA has been involved in a number of consultation on the end-of-life management of renewable energy infrastructure in Alberta to ensure that, when the time for decommissioning occurs, that reclamation and remediation can occur in a timely and effective manner that will minimize future impacts to the land, neighbours, and land owners. In comparison to oil and gas activity, there are several differences between oil and gas and renewable energy which are related to the nature of the resource itself. Landowners have more control over the direct citing of renewable energy projects and have a great ability to request accountability for the end-of-life management if they are informed at the outset of a project. The RMA has developed, in partnership with the Miistakis Institute, a resource to inform municipalities of the renewable energy approval process.

Alberta Environment and Parks has amended the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation to include renewable energy operation as an activity requiring reclamation at end of life. Under the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation, security, such as cash, must be submitted by the operator to the Government of Alberta to account for reclamation costs. If an operator fails to

comply with the Conservation and Reclamation Directive, then the security will be used for the reclamation at end of life for renewable resources. RMA assigns this resolution as **Accepted**.

Resolution 22-18F

Amendment to the Wildlife Regulations Regarding Cougars

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to amend section 7, subsection 3 of the *Wildlife Regulation* to provide the same hunting allowances for cougars on private land that already exist for wolves and black bears; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that section 7, subsection 8 of the *Wildlife Regulation*, which establishes separate hunting allowances for cougars on private land, be repealed; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that reporting a cougar kill remain as a requirement of the *Wildlife Regulation*.

DEVELOPMENTS: The response from the Government of Alberta indicates that there is not anticipated legislative or regulatory changes that impact the management of cougars and therefore, this status is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 8-18S

Amendments Required for Provincial Recycling Regulations

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to make the changes outlined under the 2013 proposed *Designated Materials Recycling Regulation*.

DEVELOPMENTS: Alberta Environment and Parks have announced a commitment to working with stakeholders, including RMA to enhance provincial recycling programs and an interest in shifting to an Extended Producer Responsibility System. However, little information is currently known on the status of this review. Until such time that a review is completed, and changes are made to Alberta's recycling framework that align with the 2013 proposed *Designated Materials Recycling Regulation*, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

RMA is active on the Agriculture Plastics Recycling Group (APRG) which recently was awarded \$1,000,000 to initiate a three-year agriculture plastics recycling program. RMA appreciates the Government of Alberta's recognition of this important initiative and will continue to work with the government to see to it that a permanent solution to the end-of-life management of agriculture plastics can be found.

Resolution 9-18S

Exemption of Seniors Housing from Requirement to Pay Carbon Levy

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) urge the Government of Alberta to exempt housing management bodies from the provincial carbon levy;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA advocate to Alberta Seniors and Housing for additional capital funds to be accessed by housing management bodies to install more efficient infrastructure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in regulated housing facilities.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta passed *Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax* and it received Royal Assent on June 4, 2019. The carbon levy no longer applies to any type of fuel. In response the federal government announced that it will implement a Carbon Tax on Alberta in January 2020. RMA will re-visit this resolution when the federal Carbon Tax is announced.

The Affordable Housing Energy Solutions program is closed and will not be scheduling new appointments. In partnership with the Ministry of Seniors and Housing, the Affordable Housing Energy Solutions program was created to improve energy efficiency, reduce energy use and increase comfort for those with low incomes, including seniors. This fulfils the second request of the resolution, however, the program does not state when, if ever, the application process will re-open. This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part**.

Resolution 11-18S

Recycling of Solar Panels

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that the Government of Alberta expand existing recycling programs to include solar panels (photovoltaic modules).

DEVELOPMENTS: The majority of solar panels operate with a 25- to 30-year lifespan, and many of the systems installed since solar energy became financially viable are still in operation. This has meant that the recycling of solar panels has not yet become a widespread concern. However, there will be a time in the near future when an economic and pragmatic approach to solar panel recycling is needed.

RMA is interested in seeing proper end-of-life management programs developed for a wide range of materials used commonly in the province, including solar panels. RMA is awaiting a review of Alberta's recycling program, and hopes that solar panel recycling will be considered within that review. At the current time, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 2-17F

Completion of Alberta's Land-use Framework Prior to Establishment of Conservation and Protected Areas for Species at Risk

Status: Accepted in Principle

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties requests that no additional conservation or protected areas be established, proposed or expanded in Alberta prior to the implementation of the remaining regional land-use plans.

DEVELOPMENTS: The regional planning process under the Land-use Framework has been slowed considerably and Alberta remains without regional plans in areas of significant future development. The lack of regional plans creates challenges when the Government of Alberta has moved forward with the protection or conservation of land without the context of the regional plans.

As noted in the response from the Government of Alberta, the Government of Canada has mandated the creation of caribou range plans – a process which is complicated by the lack of a regional plan in north western Alberta. This process has involved numerous consultations and recently, in March 2018, the Government of Alberta suspended the creation of caribou protection plans and requested additional assistance from the Government of Canada to identify the socio-economic impacts of such plans.

This resolution speaks directly to the concerns of rural municipalities and the creation of conservation areas to protect caribou. Since the province has suspended this process in favour of a greater understanding of the impacts that future restrictions on development may have on local communities, this resolution is assigned a status **Accepted in Principle**. However, RMA is monitoring the proposed designation of several provincial parks and wildland parks in the Bighorn region, and how they may impact the expansion of protected areas.

The Government of Alberta has indicated that they will not be proceeding with the previous government's proposed plan for protected areas in Bighorn Country. The Minister of Environment and Parks has stated residents, municipal officials and First Nations groups have raised concerns about how the proposal might affect oil and gas exploration and off-road vehicle use, and there were a lot of economic and environmental concerns that were not answered through the consultation process. The Government of Alberta has shifted future land use planning decisions to the North Saskatchewan regional planning process under the Land-use Framework. RMA appreciates that under the North Saskatchewan regional planning process, the government will consult with local residents, municipalities Indigenous groups and other stakeholders to determine how best to manage the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan region. The consultation process has not yet commenced, and the resolution will be revisited based on how the proposal proceeds.

Resolution 3-17F

Municipal Action on Caribou Recovery Planning

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties proactively lead inter-jurisdictional municipal level caribou population recovery planning across Western Canada.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA has not undertaken inter-jurisdictional municipal level caribou population recovery across western Canada. RMA has, however, advocated member concerns on this issue and in March 2018, the Government of Alberta suspended the creation of caribou protection plans and requested additional assistance from the Government of Canada to identify the socio-economic impacts of such plans.

Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) has assembled three caribou sub-regional task forces that will advise the government on land-use planning at a local scale, including caribou recovery actions. The task forces include RMA representation along with relevant stakeholders. The task forces are intended to provide recommendations to the government on draft sub-regional plans for Cold Lake, Bistcho Lake and Upper Smoky. AEP are focused on creating sub-regional plans that fit within local and regional economies. RMA's involvement on the task forces is an important step to bring forward member concerns surrounding the socio-economic impacts that would result from loss of activity and sterilization of large tracts of land from caribou conservation. Although, it has not been determined whether the information from these task forces will be used on an inter-jurisdictional level, it may lead to that opportunity.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 4-17F

Water Act Approvals for Municipal Projects on Municipal Land

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties urge the Government of Alberta to relax the requirement for formal approvals on all road construction on municipal right of ways less than 40 metres wide and consider alternate strategies for protecting water resources.

DEVELOPMENTS: Though the response from the Government of Alberta recognizes the challenges faced by municipalities who are subject to relatively short construction seasons and extensive infrastructure networks, the response does not indicate any change in process or regulation to the extent outlined in the resolution. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 1-17S

Carbon Levy Exemption of Natural Gas and Propane for All Food Production Uses

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties appeal to the Government of Alberta to provide carbon levy exemption certificates for the use of natural gas and propane for all food production uses.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta passed *Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax* and it received Royal Assent on June 4, 2019. The carbon levy no longer applies to any type of fuel including natural gas and propane as of May 2019. Therefore, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**. RMA will re-visit this resolution when the federal Carbon Tax is announced.

Resolution 6-17S

Addendum to the Species at Risk Act

Status: Incomplete Information

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties urge the Government of Alberta to request the Government of Canada to amend the *Species at Risk Act* to include an addition to Section 64 of the Act to be entered as 64 (1)(c), to read as follows:

“The Minister(s), before implementing any order, plan, program, or designation that affects any proprietary interest in lands, held by title or leased, by any individual, corporation or entity other than government, shall enter into an agreement to establish the compensation for the loss of interest in those lands including relative legal expenses, or the loss of productivity of those lands, and for greater certainty, no order, plan, program, or designation shall be in force until the agreement is ratified by all parties involved.”; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that Government of Alberta reaffirm to the Government of Canada that any action, program, plan, order, or designation contrived by the federal government that affects any lands or properties that are not within the proprietary responsibility of the Government of Canada as set out in Schedule Three of the *Constitution Act 1867*, will have no force or effect and considered ultra-vires to the Supreme Law of Canada as referenced by Section 92.13 *Constitution Act 1867* and assuredly, Section 52 of the *Constitution Act 1983*.

DEVELOPMENTS: To date, there have been no amendments to the *Species at Risk Act* according to public record, in addition to no response from the Government of Canada on this resolution. This resolution has been assigned a status of **Incomplete Information**. The RMA will continue to follow-up on this issue.

Resolution 9-17S

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) seek a legal opinion on the proposed *Species at Risk Act* policies to determine what effect that the proposed policies will have on municipal operations and the rights and freedoms of rural landowners;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that if the legal opinion determines that the proposed *Species at Risk Act* policies will negatively impact rural landowners, that the AAMDC proceed with further action to work with the provincial and federal government on these proposed policies to demonstrate the social and economic impacts of policy implementation on the rural landscape.

DEVELOPMENTS: To fulfill the first part of this resolution, the RMA hired MLT Aikins to provide a legal opinion on the proposed *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) policies. The legal response identifies impacts for municipalities and rural landowners in regard to the policies, and RMA members should be aware of the implications some policies may have in regard to land-use planning and infrastructure project decisions. The legal response in its entirety is available on the RMA website.

The second part of the resolution addresses the socio-economic approaches to policy implementation. In 2019, Alberta Environment and Parks announced the creation of three caribou sub-regional task forces that will advise the government on land-use planning at a local scale, including caribou recovery actions. RMA has representation on these task forces and will be advocating on the significance of the social and economic impacts to ensure that any decision made regarding caribou conservation will utilize methods that will minimize the loss of land, sterilization of the land and will include realistic conservation methods and management tools.

As the general intent of the resolution has been met, it has been assigned a status of **Accepted in Principle** and the RMA will continue to advocate on the importance of a socio-economic approach to policy implementation, as identified in the legal analysis.

HEALTH AND SENIORS

Resolution 8-18F

Restricting the Consumption of Cannabis based on Regulations for Liquor Consumption

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta amend Section 90.28 (a) of An Act to Control and Regulate Cannabis to reflect that no person may smoke or vape cannabis in any area or place where that person is prohibited from consuming liquor under the Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act or any other Act or the bylaws of a municipality.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA understands that public consumption challenges differ between cannabis and alcohol due to the different ways the substances are consumed. However, several provinces and territories in Canada have chosen to prohibit public consumption of cannabis. RMA encourages Alberta to review the public health and enforcement impacts of its current public consumption allowances and compare them with impacts in jurisdictions that prohibit public consumption periodically.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to advocate on this issue.

Resolution 14-17F

Cannabis Act

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties advocate that the Government of Alberta oppose the legalization of cannabis for recreational use in the Province of Alberta until a complete understanding of the implications that the legalization of cannabis will have on the health of individuals and on community safety is publicly available.

DEVELOPMENTS: While RMA appreciates that the Government of Alberta has conducted extensive public engagement, with input from health, law enforcement and other subject area experts to understand the impacts of cannabis legalization, the fact remains that there are significant gaps in academic, government and industry research efforts related to the impacts of legalized cannabis on public health and community safety. RMA acknowledges that there is a stark difference between understanding concerns from stakeholders and understanding actual implications gleaned from empirical research in communities in which cannabis is legalized. RMA recognizes that this issue is not well researched, however, staff have been actively assisting municipalities in adapting to these changes by providing workshops and information as it becomes available. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**. RMA will continue to advocate that the Government of Alberta lead social and health impact assessments as information becomes available.

INDUSTRY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Resolution ER1-17F

Support for Trans Mountain Expansion Project

Status: Accepted in Principle

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) urge the Government of Alberta to continue to support the Trans Mountain Expansion Project so it can meet its commitments to delivering jobs and economic benefits and meeting its regulatory requirements during the construction and operation of the pipeline;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the AAMDC urge the Government of Canada to ensure that all regulatory processes that have been recommended for approval by the NEB and subsequently authorized by the Federal Governor in Council are permitted to proceed;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the AAMDC urge the Government of Canada to exercise ancillary powers in order to enact the comprehensive regulatory scheme for the Canadian public interest, including the right to timely permitting, thereby enabling the commencement of construction.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta has been a strong supporter of the Trans Mountain Expansion Project, and has worked to ensure Alberta's natural resources meet tidewater. Based on both the Government of Alberta's response to this resolution and recent comments from the Premier of Alberta and other provincial ministers, RMA is satisfied that the Government of Alberta is sufficiently supportive of this project.

As of August 31, 2018, the Government of Canada purchased the Trans Mountain Expansion Project, demonstrating commitment to completing the project. On June 18, 2019, the Government of Canada announced that construction of the pipeline was approved with 156 conditions to be enforced by the Canada Energy Regulator (CER). The CER replaced the NEB. Construction began in Alberta in December 2019, however there is an ongoing case before the Federal Court of Appeal (scheduled for December 16, 2019) which will consider challenges from six indigenous groups who say the Canadian government did not sufficiently consult them on the project.

Given that the Government of Alberta's support of the Trans Mountain Expansion Project meets the intent of the first operative clause of the resolution, and the Government of Canada has approved the project, pending a legal challenge from indigenous group, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Principle**, and RMA will continue to advocate on this issue at the federal level.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

Resolution 2-18F

Annual Release Date of Assessment Year Modifiers

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to set the annual date of release of assessment year modifiers at September 15th or the nearest business day afterwards to allow municipalities to be properly informed when making budget decisions.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that due to requirements within the *Municipal Government Act* requiring assessed values to be based on a July 1 date, the process of gathering and analyzing assessment data and developing the annual assessment year modifier (AYM) cannot be significantly changed. RMA understands the impact of these regulatory requirements.

RMA has followed up with Alberta Municipal Affairs to discuss the possibility of amending the *Matters Relating to Assessment And Taxation Regulation* to change the July 1 estimate date to allow the finalized AYM to be shared with municipalities at a date that better aligns with the municipal budget cycle. Alberta Municipal Affairs staff appeared open to considering this change, but no formal action has taken place to date.

In advance of the 2020 tax year, municipalities continue to face uncertainty regarding AYM and industrial property assessment in general due to the ongoing assessment model review. At this point, there is no information available on how AYM will be calculated moving forward or how they will align with other aspects of the model being reviewed, such as construction costs and depreciation. This uncertainty is causing municipalities significant planning and budgeting challenges.

Additionally, as this resolution was partly necessitated due to the unexpected freezing of AYM in late 2017 after draft AYM were shared earlier in the year with no indication of a possible freeze, Alberta Municipal Affairs should enact a policy or internal requirement that final AYM can differ by no more than a set percentage from draft AYM, to allow municipalities with some assurance when drafting budgets prior to receiving final AYM.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**, and will work with Alberta Municipal Affairs to develop possible solutions.

Resolution 6-18F

Securing Municipal Property Taxes in the Event of Bankruptcy or Insolvency

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta partner with Alberta Urban Municipalities Association to advocate to the Government of Alberta to amend section 348 and other relevant sections of the *Municipal Government Act* to ensure that municipal property taxes are legally assured a status as a secured claim in the event that the property owner enters bankruptcy or receivership.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates the recent actions taken by the Government of Alberta to alleviate the ongoing challenges that rural municipalities are facing regarding the collection of unpaid property taxes on linear properties. However, both the Provincial Education Requisition Credit (PERC) Program and allowing municipalities to place a \$0 assessment on linear properties owned by defunct companies are relatively small measures that attempt to alleviate the negative impacts that an unclear tax recovery regime has on rural municipalities.

Although these measures are appreciated, they come nowhere close to addressing the fundamental issue of a lack of tools for municipalities to address tax recovery from bankrupt companies. According to a 2019 RMA member survey, rural municipalities are facing at least \$81 million in unpaid property taxes from oil and gas companies, many of which are bankrupt.

In September 2019, the Supreme Court of Canada denied the application brought forward by three Alberta rural municipalities related to the Alberta Court of Appeal decision in *Northern Sunrise County v Virginia Hills Oil Corp*, 2019 ABCA 61. The denial confirms that the *Municipal Government Act* does not grant a municipality a special lien for unpaid linear property taxes. The decision confirms that municipalities cannot use s. 348 to seize linear property for unpaid taxes, severely limiting their tax recovery tools. The decision heightens the urgency for action on amending the MGA to ensure municipalities have tax enforcement and recovery powers.

As the Government of Alberta has not amended section 348, including through recent omnibus bills that made significant changes to many sections of the MGA, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to advocate on this issue moving forward.

Resolution 1-18S

Request for Implementation of the 2018 Assessment Year Modifier for Well and Pipeline Assessments

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) lobby the Government of Alberta to immediately implement the 2018 assessment year modifier to well and pipeline assessments as identified in the draft calculation.

DEVELOPMENTS: The freezing of AYMs at 2017 levels caused significant frustration for RMA members, many of whom had prepared budgets based on draft AYM projections that the Government of Alberta had shared with municipalities prior to the freeze. In early 2019, Alberta Municipal Affairs informed RMA that the AYM process was being reviewed as part of a larger assessment model review that also includes updating construction costs for machinery and

equipment and pipeline properties and depreciation measures. The Government of Alberta indicated that the review would be complete in the summer or early fall of 2019, but as of late November 2019, the review is ongoing and municipalities are facing uncertainty as to the AYM for the 2020 tax year.

While RMA and its members recognize the importance of having an improved process that is reflective of local costs and assessment variables, it is not clear what the result of this review will be, and why it was necessary to freeze 2018 AYM with no warning to accommodate the review. RMA is disappointed that municipal stakeholders (including RMA and the Alberta Assessors Association) have not been adequately involved in the review process, and that no updates have been provided to municipalities who rely on accurate assessment information to properly budget. As assessment is critical to municipal viability, the municipal voice must be properly represented during future reviews. The Government of Alberta's continued freeze of the AYM means that this resolution is assigned the status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 1-17F Centralization of Industrial Properties Assessment

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties request Alberta Municipal Affairs to delay implementation of the centralization of industrial property assessment until such time as Ministry personnel can procure the appropriate resources to develop valuation standards, regulated assessment rates, undertake and complete impact studies, communicate and collaborate with municipalities so the identified risks to their primary revenue structure can be mitigated throughout the transition and beyond.

DEVELOPMENTS: The centralization of industrial assessment was a significant shift to the *Municipal Government Act* under the most recent review. This change has the potential to disrupt municipal assessment operations and remove established local knowledge of facilities within municipalities. The resolution requests a delay in the implementation of the centralization until "Ministry personnel can procure the appropriate resources to develop valuation standards, regulated assessment rates, undertake and complete impact studies, communicate and collaborate with municipalities."

Since Alberta Municipal Affairs assumed their new responsibilities as of January 2018 and there was no delay, this resolution's intent has not been fulfilled. On January 1, 2018, the Government of Alberta began a phased transition to centralized assessment by providing direct assessment of some designated industrial properties while temporarily contracting municipalities to provide the remaining assessments. In July 2019, the Government of Alberta centralized an additional portion of the remaining contracted assessment work, and transition to a fully centralized system is expected to be complete in 2021. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 2-17S

Amendments to Section 348 of the *Municipal Government Act*

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties request that the Government of Alberta amend Section 348 of the *Municipal Government Act* to reflect that no Crown lending institutions be allowed to take priority over any claims due to the municipality.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA members have been facing considerable challenges collecting unpaid taxes from property owners. A 2019 RMA member survey indicated that rural municipalities are facing a liability of between \$81 million and \$96 million in unpaid property taxes. These efforts are further frustrated by the hierarchy of claims that places municipalities at a significant disadvantage to collect unpaid property taxes against other liabilities that the property owner possesses. Three RMA members are currently involved in legal action as to whether the special lien provisions in section 348 are applicable to linear property. Should section 348 be deemed not applicable to linear property, municipalities will be even more challenged in claiming uncollected taxes. RMA is also planning to work directly with Municipal Affairs to clarify what options are available to municipalities under section 348 and other areas of the *Municipal Government Act*, both in cases where tax-owing companies are bankrupt or continue to operate.

In addition to the general challenges associated with section 348 outlined above, this resolution is intended to specifically address the ability of the Agricultural Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) to priority over a municipality in seizing property and assets to recover outstanding debt from the property owner. As a lending institution with the ability to evaluate, approve and reject loan requests based on the risk involved, it is unclear why AFSC should be able to transfer the risks they incur as a lender to municipalities who must collect taxes to provide municipal services by having the ability to take priority over a municipality in the recovery of assets for unpaid debts/taxes.

As indicated in the response from Alberta Municipal Affairs, amendments to Section 348 are not being considered and therefore, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 4-17S

Collection of Outstanding Taxes for Education Requisitions From the Province of Alberta

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties request that the Government of Alberta develop new tools or utilize existing mechanisms to ensure that municipalities that are unable to collect education property taxes through the tax recovery process be exempted from forwarding those uncollectible tax amounts to Alberta Education, or have the uncollectible amount refunded.

DEVELOPMENTS: In fall 2017, the Government of Alberta announced the Provincial Education Requisition Credit (PERC) program, under which municipalities who have no choice but to remit requisitions to the Government of Alberta for unpaid education property taxes on linear oil and gas properties may apply to receive a credit equivalent to the amount of the requisition. PERC is funded through the Alberta School Foundation Fund’s net asset fund.

At this point, PERC extends to the 2019 tax year, and is capped at \$10 million per year. As of November 2018, 37 applications had been processed and approximately \$3 million of credits had been issued. Applications are expected to continue to be accepted in 2019 and 2020. While PERC is a helpful program for municipalities, it is important to consider that municipalities are only eligible to collect PERC benefits after writing off a tax debt, which is highly unlikely to occur in cases where delinquent companies continue to operate. At this point, it is not clear whether PERC will be extended beyond the 2019 tax year. If it is not continued, the status of this resolution will be re-evaluated.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**, and the RMA will continue to work with the Government of Alberta to support the long-term viability of the PERC program and develop other mechanisms to address unpaid linear property taxes.

The RMA conducted a survey of unpaid taxes on oil and gas companies and found that \$81 million in unpaid taxes remains outstanding despite the PERC program.

Resolution 8-17S

Oldman River Regional Services Commission Regional Planning Funding

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties request that the Government of Alberta provide long term, provincial funding to all municipalities for regional planning activities in a similar fashion to the Calgary Regional Partnership and the Capital Region Board.

DEVELOPMENTS: This resolution requests “long term, provincial funding to all municipalities for regional planning activities in a similar fashion to the Calgary Regional Partnership and the Capital Region Board”, but as outlined in the response provided from Alberta Municipal Affairs, funding offered through the Alberta Community Partnership (ACP) grant is not provided to meet the operational delivery of municipal services. ACP funding is instead provided to the Growth Management Boards (GMBs) to meet their legislated mandate. Though funding was provided to the Oldman River Regional Services Commission along with other regional planning service providers in 2017, this funding is not long term. ACP funding is available “to partnerships of two or more municipalities to develop or expand regional municipal service delivery,” but such funding is not intended to be long-term in nature, but rather to define governance roles and responsibilities related to the partnership.

The Government of Alberta is planning to review aspects of the *Municipal Government Act* related to regional service commissions in early 2020 which may address funding issues.

Given the differences between the GMBs and other planning bodies in the province, it is difficult to draw direct comparisons but given the lack of additional long-term funding provided to regional planning organizations such as the ORRSC, this resolution is identified as **Intent Not Met**.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Resolution 18-18F

Utility Conflict in Municipal Right of Ways

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta collaborate with the Government of Alberta and other stakeholders to create a better process of locating and marking utilities to alleviate the added costs and delays being incurred by municipalities conducting infrastructure maintenance or construction; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that options considered in this process include:

- **negotiate with utility companies to ensure they honor their schedules or be held responsible to pay for all delays, impacts and costs associated with these delays; and**
- **create a universal master agreement for utility companies to enter into with all municipalities whereby utility companies pay a fee per lineal meter for their utilities to be located within municipal road right of way.**

DEVELOPMENTS: The response provided by the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) indicates the unique challenges related to the utility right of way approval process. The first part of this resolution requests an improvement to the utility marking and locating process to reduce delays and costs. The AUC response explains the current process but does not indicate plans to improve it. Not mentioned in the response but relevant to the resolution is the recent passing of Bill 211: *Alberta Underground Infrastructure Notification System Consultation Act* in the Alberta Legislature. Bill 211 would form a committee of the Legislative Assembly to prepare and submit a “report on the underground infrastructure notification system in Alberta, which must include any recommendations for amendments to legislation to improve safety for excavators and to protect underground infrastructure.” Among other things, the report must consider “enforcement of rules pertaining to the underground infrastructure notification system.” RMA formally supported the passing of Bill 211. Bill 211 received first reading in March 2019. Unfortunately, due to the provincial election in April 2019, the Bill did not proceed to second reading or receive royal assent. However, RMA is hopeful that the current government will re-introduce and pass Bill 211 soon.

The second part of this resolution requests the development of a master agreement which would include a fee per lineal metre to be paid by utility companies with infrastructure within a municipality’s boundaries. The AUC response raises concerns about the costs such an approach would impose on utility companies, which would be passed along to consumers. RMA looks forward to discussing this approach and its pros and cons with the AUC. At this point, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, but RMA looks forward to progressing on this issue through Bill 211 and other discussions with the AUC.

Resolution 7-18S

Standards for Property Contaminated by Fentanyl and Carfentanil

Status: Accepted in Principle

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request the Government of Alberta to establish defined standards and consistent regulated approaches for inspecting property contaminated by fentanyl or carfentanil.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that Alberta Health is aware of the lack of guidance related to the remediation of fentanyl-contaminated properties and is in the process of developing an approach or mechanism to address this issue. As of December 2019, Alberta Health staff indicated that a guide was finalized and awaiting ministerial approval. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Principle** and will monitor Alberta Health’s progress in releasing the guide.

Resolution 19-17F

Builder Licensing Program Impacts

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) request that the Government of Alberta delay the implementation of the Builder Licensing Program until such time it can reasonably demonstrate that the impacts of such a program will yield a positive impact on the residential construction industry and its participants;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the AAMDC request that the Government of Alberta recognize and resolve the negative impacts of the *New Home Buyers Protection Act* on rural Alberta tradesmen, municipalities, and home owners.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates a positive reception to the builder licensing program and clarifies that the program does not directly apply to trades involved in residential construction. The resolution requests that the builder licensing program be delayed until “it can reasonably demonstrate that the impacts of such a program will yield a positive impact on the residential construction industry and its participants”. Given that it is unclear whether a “positive impact” is resulting from the existing program, and it is implied in the resolution that the initial program was not having a positive impact, RMA assumes that continuing the program in its current format does not meet the intent of this resolution. Additionally, the government response does not include reference to the *New Home Buyers Protection Act*.

The United Conservative Party’s (UCP) policy platform included a commitment to “Reduce red tape burdens on home builders to lower the regulatory cost that has increased the price of new

housing.” As the UCP was elected as Alberta’s government earlier in 2019, they will presumably take action to meet this platform commitment. The commitment does not specifically reference changes to the Builder Licensing Program, and to this point, no changes have been made to the program by the UCP government. However, RMA will continue to monitor government action on this platform commitment and whether it may impact the program.

This resolution has been assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will monitor the Government of Alberta’s actions in reducing the regulatory burden on new home builders.

POLICING AND RURAL CRIME

Resolution 2-18S

Combatting Rural Crime

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta develop and implement strategies and initiatives to prevent and combat rural crime, and punish those convicted of committing rural crime in a manner that will maximize deterrence;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA, through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, request the Government of Canada to continue with its review of the criminal justice system and sentencing reforms in a way that gets repeat offenders off the street for longer periods of time.

DEVELOPMENTS: In March 2018, the Government of Alberta implemented a Rural Crime Action Plan intended to reduce rural crime by better focusing resources in rural areas and prioritizing a proactive and strategic approach to addressing rural crime. The Action Plan included the following seven points:

- Crime reduction units: Specially trained officers will focus on arresting prolific offenders. This initiative will expand on a successful pilot project in Central Alberta.
- Specialized police intelligence: Six additional intelligence-focused RCMP officers plus four crime analyst positions will allow the RCMP to identify prolific offenders and target organized crime.
- Policing support centre: RCMP officers need to be on the streets protecting our communities, not behind a desk filling out paperwork. Twenty-three civilians will input investigative updates dictated over the phone by officers.
- More Crown prosecutors: \$2 million will allow the Alberta Crown Prosecution Service to hire up to 10 Crown prosecutors who will focus solely on rural crime.
- Better coordination: Sharing information with Alberta sheriffs, Fish and Wildlife Enforcement, Commercial Vehicle Enforcement and conservation officers will effectively make these officials additional “eyes and ears” for police.
- Enhanced technology: The RCMP will work with Alberta Justice and Solicitor General and other partners to explore new ways of using technology to target rural crime, including bait programs.
- Public education and engagement: The RCMP will engage and educate Albertans about crime prevention.

The Action Plan was supported by a \$10 million investment from the Government of Alberta.

In September 2018, the Government of Alberta and Royal Canadian Mounted Police jointly announced an 11% decrease in property crimes in rural Alberta detachments between January

and July 2018 – a reduction that is at least partly linked by the Government of Alberta to the initiatives in the Action Plan.

In February 2019, the Government of Alberta announced the next phase of the Action Plan, called “Project Lock-Up,” which will focus on collaboration between police and other enforcement organizations such as community peace officer, sheriffs, fish and wildlife officers, and others to increase patrols in “hard hit” rural areas, enhance victim support and communication, provide residents of “hard hit” areas with trace pens to increase the likelihood of recovering stolen property, and further enhance investigative response in high priority areas.

In spring 2019, the newly-elected UCP government announced a rural crime strategy based on their 2018 report titled *A Safer Alberta: United Conservative Strategy to Tackle the Rural Crime Crisis*. In fall 2019, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General Doug Schweitzer undertook a province-wide townhall tour to gather information to support the further development of a plan. Additionally, in November 2019, the Government of Alberta announced several more initiatives to address rural crime, including the expansion of the role of approximately 400 peace officers to respond to a wider range of calls and better support the RCMP, a strengthening of property rights through changes to the *Occupiers’ Liability Act*, an increase in enforcement and preventative measures related to metal theft, and the allowance of “community impact statements” in trials related to rural crime.

RMA is pleased with the Action Plan and the early positive indicators of its effectiveness in decreasing rural crime, as well as the initiatives taken to date by the UCP government, and will advocate for the Government of Alberta to make a long-term funding commitment to sustain or expand the initial Action Plan.

One area of potential concern related to provincial actions relates to the development of a new police costing model that will require municipalities that currently have policing provided under the Provincial Police Services Agreement to contribute directly to a portion of frontline policing costs. RMA will be closely monitor the roll-out of the model to ensure that it enhances policing levels and does not instead require municipalities to reduce other public safety initiatives to cover new policing costs.

RMA also forwarded this resolution to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) as per the second operative clause. FCM reviewed the resolution and categorized it as “issues not within municipal and/or federal jurisdiction,” meaning it is not within the scope of FCM’s mandate, mainly because a request to advocate for “sentencing reforms in a way that gets repeat offenders off the street for longer periods of time” is not a specific municipal issue, although it would indirectly support municipalities by helping to address rural crime. RMA is disappointed with this response but will continue to work with FCM to share the rural Alberta perspective on issues related to crime and justice.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Part**, and will continue to advocate on this issue at the provincial level and to the FCM.

Resolution 3-18S

Increase Crown Prosecutor Staffing Levels for Rural Municipalities

Status: Accepted in Principle

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) encourage the Government of Alberta to increase Crown prosecutor staffing levels as well as relevant administrative staff for rural municipalities and collaborate with rural municipalities to ensure that court cases are being sufficiently prosecuted in a timely manner.

DEVELOPMENTS: As indicated in the Government of Alberta response, two million dollars has been allocated under the Rural Crime Action Plan to hire up to ten Crown prosecutors to focus on rural crime. RMA is pleased with this commitment as well as the Government of Alberta's swiftness in hiring eight of ten prosecutors to this point.

The UCP government built on this commitment in their pre-election platform by committing to spending \$10 million per year over the next four years to hire an additional 50 prosecutors. This initiative was supported in the 2019 provincial budget. Additionally, in November 2019, the Government of Alberta announced a plan to double the number of articling students hired by the Crown prosecution service from eight to 16, with an increase to at least 20 by 2021. According to Minister of Justice and Solicitor General Doug Schweitzer, the increase in articling students is in addition to the commitment to hire an additional 50 Crown prosecutors, and that the students will be prioritized for placement in rural Alberta.

While this is a positive development, there is no indication of how many of the additional 50 prosecutors will be assigned to rural Alberta.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Principle**, and will be reviewed in the future when information on the extent to which the increase in Crown prosecutors have shortened waiting periods for prosecution is available.

Resolution 12-18S

Victim Services Units Funding

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) lobby the Government of Alberta to use the monies from the Victims of Crime Fund to adequately fund provincial victim services units so they can provide the staffing levels required to assist victims of crime.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates action to divert greater amounts from the Victims of Crime Fund to support victim services units. More specifically, the Government of Alberta has increased the maximum annual funding that victim services units in Alberta's large urban centers can access, as maximum amounts will increase from \$300,000 to \$500,000 in Edmonton and Calgary, and from \$150,000 to \$300,000 in Red Deer, Grande Prairie,

Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (which had already been temporarily increased to \$265,000 due to wildfires in 2016). While this is a positive development, the maximum annual funding amount for all other victim services units appears to have remained at \$150,000. As some rural areas in Alberta are experiencing extremely high crime rates, and victim services unit funding is based on an allocation formula that takes into consideration local crime rates, RMA believes that the maximum potential annual funding amount should be increased for all victim services units to allow for consistent access to funding across the province, as crime rates do not necessarily align with population.

In December 2019, the Government of Alberta undertook a consultation on the replacement of the Victims of Crime Financial Benefits Program (VCFBP) with a new “Alberta Victim Assistance” program, which is intended to replace the financial support focus of the VCFBP with a program that is more service-oriented and effectively meets the needs of victims who may experience challenges in accessing legal, emotional, or other support services, including those in rural areas. As of the writing of this development, RMA is in the process of submitting input on this issue, which will be informed by this resolution and emphasize the importance of victim services units in rural communities across the province.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Part**, and will continue to advocate on this issue and monitor the consultation that is currently underway.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Resolution 1-18F

Provincial Contribution to Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to provide additional funding to municipalities for the provincial contribution of Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program funding.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that due to fiscal restraints additional funding is not available to support municipalities in leveraging funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) beyond the use of existing provincial grants that support the same project types as those eligible under ICIP.

RMA appreciates the fiscal challenges facing the Government of Alberta and the challenges that federal cost-share requirements can have on provincial budgets. However, ICIP presents a unique opportunity to leverage federal funding to cover a significant portion of the costs of infrastructure projects that would otherwise be entirely a municipal or provincial (through grant funding) responsibility. Additionally, Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) funding is intended to support long-term municipal capital planning and expecting municipalities to redirect that funding to apply to ICIP-supported projects contradicts the emphasis that the Government of Alberta has placed on long-term planning in recent years.

RMA appreciates that, as identified in Alberta Infrastructure's response, ICIP's Community, Culture, and Recreation stream, which is most likely to require municipalities to use funds to meet provincial cost-share requirements, is already significantly oversubscribed. However, this is not an indicator that the provincial cost-share contribution is meeting the needs of most municipalities in the province, but rather that many of Alberta's municipalities are so in need of infrastructure funding that they are willing to divert previously planned MSI funding to pursue ICIP-supported projects.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will advocate for the more strategic leveraging of provincial funding in future federal grant programs.

Resolution 11-17S

Review of Standard Practices for Installation of High Tension Cable Barriers on Two-Lane Provincial Highways

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties urge the Government of Alberta to review Alberta Transportation's Standard Practices for installation of High Tension Cable Barriers (HTCBs) on two-lane provincial highways to ensure Alberta has the safest possible highways.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta’s response includes information detailing design options to ensure that HTCBS on two-lane highways are as safe as possible and do not impact snow removal or oversized vehicle travel on such highways. However, the resolution requests Alberta Transportation to review the current practices, which the response does not indicate a willingness to undertake.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and the RMA will continue to advocate on this issue.

OTHER

Resolution 23-18F

Social Well-Being of An Employee and Domestic Violence – Occupational Health and Safety Act

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta define what is meant by “social well-being” of an employee within the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* and the responsibilities of an employer with regard to “domestic violence or suspicion of domestic violence” within the OHSA.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that although “social well-being” is now included in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)*, it is not specifically defined. As monitoring and identifying risks to social well-being can often be much more difficult than physical aspects of health and safety, employers (including municipalities) may face significant difficulties in balancing the need to be aware of situations which may compromise social well-being with the need to respect the privacy of their employees, even within the workplace. For employers to effectively monitor the social well-being of their employees, further guidance is needed from the Government of Alberta.

The Government of Alberta response is effective in clarifying how domestic violence is linked to the workplace and employer. Clarifying that this is a valid consideration in health and safety planning will help to support safe workplaces. However, like the comment above, guidance on how municipalities can appropriately monitor their workplace for risks of domestic violence without infringing on employee property would be appreciated.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Part**, and will continue to advocate on greater clarity around defining “social well-being.”

Resolution 5-18S

Provincial Government Consultation and Communication Protocol with Municipalities

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) appeal to the Government of Alberta to establish and maintain a uniform consultation and communication protocol with municipal elected officials which is applicable to all provincial bodies;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that through this consultation and communication protocol, the Government of Alberta recognizes and acknowledges the legislated significance of municipal elected officials, and that the Government of Alberta engage municipalities openly and transparently to provide input and feedback on the consultation and communication protocol from inception through to implementation.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates the effort that Alberta Municipal Affairs have demonstrated in involving RMA and its members in consultations related to the *Municipal Government Act* review. However, the resolution requests a uniform approach to gathering direct input from municipal elected officials on issues that impact municipalities, regardless of ministry. In endorsing this resolution, RMA members have indicated that the quality of consultation varies widely, and a consistent approach is needed to ensure the municipal voice is consistently heard.

More recently, RMA has experienced several cases in which government officials leading consultations or changes to legislation and policy in certain areas were unaware of changes underway in other areas of government that, when combined, would have a cumulative impact on municipalities.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to work with the Government of Alberta to improve the consultation process with municipalities.

Resolution 9-17F

AAMDC Refusal to Engage in Exploratory Discussion to Merge with AUMA

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) refuse to enter into any discussions with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) that would result in any attempt to merge the AAMDC with AUMA.

DEVELOPMENTS: The AUMA is a valued partner for RMA, and collaborating to create a unified municipal voice on issues of mutual importance is an effective advocacy approach. However, RMA respects its members' direction that an independent rural municipal voice is needed in Alberta, and is committed to continuing to serve that role. This resolution is deemed **Accepted**.

Resolution 13-17F

AAMDC Advisory Committee to Support the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission in Reviewing Charitable Gaming in Alberta

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties establish an advisory committee with a mandate to provide a rural perspective in support of the efforts of the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission's commitment in moving forward with changes in the charitable gaming funding to treat all organizations equally across the province.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA recruited members and initiated the committee in spring 2018. Since then, the committee has met several times. In December 2018, the committee finalized their report and recommendations, which were endorsed by the RMA Board of Directors. The committee also presented their findings to members at the Spring 2019 convention.

The Government of Alberta began a review of the charitable gaming model in early 2019, which was postponed indefinitely due to the provincial election. RMA is advocating to the Government of Alberta for a resumption of the review. If the review resumes, RMA will re-share the committee's recommendations with rural municipalities and charitable organizations to support their participation. This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 15-17F

Stopping the Implementation of Proposed Federal Tax Reforms

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties urge the Government of Canada not to proceed with the proposed federal tax reforms that will negatively impact small to medium enterprises and the agricultural sector.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Canada response indicates that several proposed tax reforms will not be implemented due to concerns expressed by RMA and other stakeholders across Canada. In particular, the response highlights the decision to not proceed with proposed measures to address the multiplication of the lifetime capital gains exemption due to the potential impacts on intergenerational transfers of family businesses, including farms.

The Government of Canada will also not implement changes related to the conversion of income into capital gains due to their potential unintended impacts on small businesses and farms. Additionally, the government of Canada plans to consult farmers, fishers, and other business owners on how to better accommodate intergenerational transfers of businesses while protecting the fairness of the tax system.

While RMA is pleased with the Government of Canada's willingness to re-evaluate these proposed changes, it should be noted that other proposed changes, such as those to address passive investment and its use by high income individuals will persist. For example, changes to passive income requirements for small businesses that will result in the accumulation of more than \$50,000 in passive income subjecting some business earnings to a higher tax rate was implemented on January 1, 2019. As resolution 15-17F is very broad in its direction that all proposed federal tax reforms not be implemented, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Part**, and appreciates the Government of Canada's willingness to re-evaluate and not proceed on several aspects of their initial proposal.

Resolution ER3-17F

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Alberta amend section 13 of the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act* to establish up to three new electoral divisions to accommodate the need for effective representation of Alberta's growing urban population, while not sacrificing current rural representation; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) urge the Government of Alberta to prioritize effective representation for rural Alberta by not approving a reduction in the number of constituencies in rural Alberta; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the AAMDC request the Government of Alberta to not implement the Alberta Electoral Boundary Commission's final recommendations until the following principles are prioritized:

- That geographic size limitations, local variations in population density, and accessibility of MLAs be prioritized as a determining factor in developing electoral boundaries; and
- Constituencies structure should be maintained to combine urban and rural areas to include a balance of urban and rural populations to reflect the urban-rural connectedness and dependency that exists on the ground for Alberta's regions; and
- To the extent possible, no ridings fracture rural municipalities into multiple constituencies.

DEVELOPMENTS: The government response to the resolution indicates that no additional changes were made or will be made to electoral boundaries and that the changes were codified in legislation in December 2017. As such, the resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**. RMA will continue to advocate for effective rural representation in future reviews of Alberta's electoral boundaries, and work with urban MLAs to ensure issues important to rural Albertans are understood and acted upon in Alberta's legislature.

CONTRIBUTORS

The Rural Municipalities of Alberta wishes to thank the Board of Directors members who provided content, input, and advice to this report card:

- Al Kemmere, President
- Kara Westerlund, Vice President
- Brian Brewin, Director, District 1
- Paul McLaughlin, Director, District 2
- Kathy Rooyakkers, Director, District 3
- Tom Burton, Director, District 4
- Soren Odegard, Director, District 5

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- Gerald Rhodes, Executive Director
- Tasha Blumenthal, Director of External Relations and Advocacy
- Wyatt Skovron, Senior Policy Advisor
- Alex Mochid, Policy Advisor
- Warren Noga, Policy Advisor