

Climate Change

Climate change is a real and pressing concern and meaningful action is required to both mitigate and adapt to these concerns. The Alberta Climate Leadership Plan (ACLP) is intended to help government shape a clear and informed climate change policy that positions Alberta's economy for long-term success in a lower-carbon world. The federal Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change also outlines strategic action to address climate change across Canada and will impose climate change mitigation strategies on provinces that do not have equivalent policies in place. These guiding policies demonstrate that rural municipalities need to be proactive in the climate change discussion.

RMA's position statements on climate change are broken into five core categories; overarching statements, carbon levy, the phase-out of coal generated electricity, supporting greater development of renewable energy and energy efficiency, and placing a cap on oil sands emissions to 100 MT per year.

Overarching position statements

- RMA recognizes that Alberta is striving to be a leader in climate change policy. To support effective implementation of provincial climate change policies, alignment between *Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan* and the federal *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change* is essential.
- Municipalities recognize the risks of climate change and are active participants in programs that aim to reduce impacts for the benefit of current and future generations (ex. participation in programs offered through the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre).
- Climate change is an increasingly important policy issue that is influenced by multiple factors, including population growth, resource development, and environmental concerns.
- Rural municipalities are partners in Alberta's climate change initiatives.
- All climate change mitigation and adaptation policies should be accompanied by tangible and realistic performance measures to ensure success and constant improvement, but also to ensure benefits are realized at the least cost.
- RMA is actively involved in the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre (MCCAC), which provides technical assistance and expertise to municipalities to increase energy efficiency of operations and support the reduction of greenhouse gases.
- RMA recognizes the continued support of the Government of Alberta in the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre (MCCAC), a partnership between the RMA, AUMA, and the Government of Alberta. Through an expanded funding arrangement and mandate, the MCCAC continues to support municipalities, community organizations, and schools in

adopting energy efficiency retrofits, renewable energy generation, and climate change adaptation planning.

- The MCCAC provides technical expertise to support initiatives that reflect local mitigation and adaptation priorities and contribute to achieving global climate change goals.
- The approval processes for solar and wind projects must have both clarity and transparency to ensure landowners and communities are informed about the projects developed on and surrounding their lands.
- It is crucial that the Government of Alberta ensures that all renewable energy infrastructure and property may be assessed by municipalities in a fair manner.
- In the transition to 30 per cent renewables by 2030, large scale renewable projects, such as wind farms and large solar arrays, will require large tracts of land for projects. As a result, rural residents will carry a disproportionate burden of the Alberta climate change policies through changes to land-use on the rural landscape.
- Climate change policy should consider the social, economic and environmental impacts and benefits of agriculture and food production, as well as the ecological goods and services derived from the rural land base.
- To support a cohesive approach to addressing climate change, municipalities should work collaboratively with their neighbours and Indigenous communities to access programs and leverage resources that will provide local and regional benefits.

Carbon levy

- Recognizing that there is only one taxpayer, municipalities operate using taxpayer funding and should be exempt from the carbon levy. Under the carbon levy, the municipal costs to deliver services and maintain infrastructure has risen and this has a direct impact on municipal ratepayers and municipal service delivery.
- RMA urges the Government of Alberta to implement a revenue neutral approach to ensure that impacts of the carbon levy do not result in undue hardship for Albertans.
- The carbon levy may be an effective tool in reducing greenhouse gas emissions; however, its impacts on municipalities and rural residents must be considered.
- Rural residents have few alternative transportation options which limits their ability to reduce their use of fossil-fuel

powered vehicles. This will remain the case until affordable transportation technologies become available that are suitable for use in rural areas.

- To demonstrate the importance of addressing climate change, revenue received from the carbon levy should be redirected to address climate change mitigation and adaptation directly as opposed to funding social initiatives. Sufficient funding is needed and should be directed to programs that reduce GHG emissions in a measured and transparent manner.
- Without viable alternatives, incentive programs will have little effect in reducing carbon emissions. Alternatives for transportation and other municipal operations, such as the operation of heavy machinery, are needed to realize reductions in emissions.
- A portion of the carbon levy should be dedicated to support municipalities whose economies are dependent on high carbon industries as they transition to low carbon economic activities.
- Agriculture serves an important role in carbon sequestration. The agricultural sector has a unique ability to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, store or sequester carbon in soils, and increase the resilience of soils to a changing climate.
- The Government of Alberta should consider addressing the increasing administrative costs included in the billing for utilities in Alberta. The disproportionate increase in administrative costs makes the carbon levy and climate change less affordable for Albertans.
- Recognizing that the federal government will be imposing carbon-pricing in all provinces across Canada by 2019, a made in Alberta solution for lowering carbon levels allows a local solution and transition period as opposed to a federally mandated approach.
- When considering climate change related legislation and policies, the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada must consider, not only the direct costs to municipalities and rural residents but also the indirect costs that are distributed throughout the rural economy.

Phase out of coal generated electricity

- Phasing out coal-generated electricity will impact communities and Albertans employed in the coal industry as the province transitions to increased use of renewable energy. Financial supports and resources need to be in place to assist these communities during this transition and engagement with the RMA and its member municipalities is necessary to ensure there is a balance between achieving climate leadership and the sustainability of communities impacted by this transition.

- Engagement with communities directly impacted by the phase out of coal-generated electricity is essential to understand the social and economic impacts resulting from closing facilities.
- Where possible and fiscally prudent, the Government of Alberta should work with Alberta's existing electricity producers to repurpose or retrofit existing facilities to allow for long term economic stability in those communities.

Supporting greater development of renewable energy and energy efficiency

- RMA is a founding partner of the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre (MCCAC) and values the provision of funding and services to support municipalities in adopting energy efficiency improvements.
- As the government closest to the people, municipalities are a vital partner in supporting renewable energy projects and energy efficiency initiatives.
- When undertaking renewable projects, the government, and regulators such as Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC), should adhere to municipal land-use bylaws.
- Rural municipalities should have the authority to properly locate renewable energy projects within their boundaries to ensure efficient and effective land-use planning and to minimize any disturbance to residents.
- Renewable energy projects must be equipped with an end-of-life of management plan for the renewable energy infrastructure and assets to ensure that such infrastructure is not left on the rural landscape to the detriment of rural landowners.

Placing a cap on oil sands emissions to 100 MT per year

- RMA recognizes the importance of the oil sands resource to RMA members and their municipal neighbours, as well as all Albertans and Canadians. Implementation of the 100 MT per year limit on emissions must occur in a thoughtful manner that minimizes any adverse economic or social impacts to the oil sands region.

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