



The Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) represents Alberta's 63 rural municipalities, five specialized municipalities, and the Special Areas Board. Together, our members represent 85% of Alberta's land mass.

Our member municipalities are vibrant, diverse, and forward-thinking. The RMA is a resourceful, responsive, and resilient advocate for rural priorities on key policy issues at both the provincial and federal level. Rural Alberta is an economic driver comprised of strong communities that deserve a unified voice and the RMA is honored to serve in that role.

The RMA acts as a rural municipal advocate in many ways, including the following:

- Participating in formal consultations with other levels of government
- Fostering relationships and meeting regularly with provincial ministers, MLAs, opposition leaders, and public service leaders
- Engaging in two-way conversation with members, both to inform members of provincial and federal policy and program changes, and to be informed of changing rural municipal priorities
- Collaborating with other organizations and stakeholders to advocate on issues of joint importance
- Producing education and advocacy resources such as reports, toolkits, and newsletter bulletins for members and the broader public
- Facilitating opportunities to connect RMA members with government representatives, provincially elected officials, and key stakeholders to promote rural dialogue

The RMA values trusted and positive working relationships with Alberta's provincially-elected officials and recognizes the importance working together with those at the centre of Alberta's political landscape.

Vision

Strong, vibrant, and resilient rural communities

Mission

RMA empowers its members through proactive leadership, strategic partnerships, effective advocacy, and collective business services.

Values

- Operate with integrity and honesty
- Accountable and transparent in our actions
- Lead in a proactive, responsive, and collaborative manner
- Connected with and trusted by our members
- Be stewards of the environment

This document is intended to provide you, as a candidate for provincial office, with insight into the priority issues for Alberta's rural municipalities. Rural Alberta is "Where it All Starts." Our province was built on rural resources and rural values, and continues to rely on rural municipalities for its economic development.

In general, RMA members are characterized by very large land masses, small dispersed populations, and high levels of economic activity in areas such as agriculture, forestry and oil and gas. Villages, towns, and small cities are an important part of Alberta's landscape, and rural municipalities often work closely with their urban neighbours to deliver service and pursue economic development opportunities. However, the focus of the RMA is supporting rural municipalities.

For more information on the RMA, check out the RMA Position Statements on our 2019 provincial election web portal at RMAlberta.com/election.



HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

The RMA has identified five key priority issues for the 2019 provincial election. They are:

- 1. Including a "rural lens" on all policy decisions
- 2. Long-term, predictable municipal funding
- 3. Supporting Inter-municipal collaboration in rural Alberta
- 4. Infrastructure and transportation in aural Alberta
- 5. Environmental stewardship

For each of the RMA's priority issues an overview and background of the issue is presented. These are intended to provide candidates for provincial office with information on challenges and opportunities facing rural municipalities.

1. Including a "rural lens" on all policy decisions

For many years, growth in Alberta's urban areas has been among the highest in Canada. Rural Alberta, however, has also seen demographic and economic growth, much of which is tied to natural resource sectors. These trends provide numerous opportunities but also create challenges, specifically in relation to the provision of critical infrastructure and services. Effective solutions to growth and other challenges in urban Alberta may not be effective in rural areas, and vice versa. For this reason, it is crucial that all policy decisions be critically evaluated through a rural lens to ensure they will not have unintended impacts on rural communities.

Background Information

Rural Alberta's economic role moves far beyond simply hosting natural resources for industries such as oil, gas, forestry, and agriculture. Rural Alberta is the province's economic engine, contributing to the province's GDP at a rate that far exceeds its population.

According to a 2018 RMA report, rural Alberta is home to 41% of the public and private investment in the province, and 26% of the overall provincial GDP. This economic contribution significantly exceeds rural Alberta's 18% share of the province's population. Supporting the important industries and development in rural Alberta requires effective governance, planning, and service delivery. Alberta's rural municipalities fulfill this role and are responsible for providing municipal governance and services to approximately 85% of Alberta's land mass, and by managing approximately 75% of Alberta's roads and 60% of Alberta's bridges.

This means that the economic prosperity and well-being of all Albertans is intrinsically tied to rural Alberta, and it is important that provincial policy and programming adequately supports the needs of Alberta's rural communities so that they can continue to support key industries throughout the province.

Due to their large geographic size and small populations, providing the services and infrastructure to support strong, vibrant and resilient rural communities comes with unique challenges. Services that may be taken for granted in urban communities (such as health care facilities, schools, libraries, and high-speed broadband) can be expensive and complex to provide in rural communities. By considering how key policy decisions will impact rural Alberta and adopting a "rural lens", the Government of Alberta can understand the important nuances of rural Alberta and make policy, funding, and programming decisions that keep our communities strong, and Alberta's economy thriving.



2. Long-term, predictable municipal funding

Municipalities gather less than 10% of every tax dollar raised in Canada despite being responsible for over 60% of the country's infrastructure, and providing an array of services including road maintenance, bridge construction, and water and wastewater treatment. All Albertans rely on these services, and providing them to residents is what makes municipalities the government closest to the people. To compensate for limited access to tax revenues, Alberta's municipalities rely on a patchwork of municipal funding programs provided by the federal and provincial governments. Grant funding programs that are of particular importance to rural municipalities are the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program (STIP), which can be used by municipalities to develop and maintain local transportation infrastructure, and the Water for Life program, which can be used by municipalities to fund new water and wastewater treatment facilities. A significant priority in the 2019 provincial election is the future of the Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) program which is set to expire in 2022 and has provided municipalities with \$9.6 billion in infrastructure funding since 2007.

Background Information

Rural municipalities face unique challenges related to funding infrastructure and providing essential services to Albertans. Many of these challenges relate to the need to provide services across a large geographic area with low population densities. To assist with the costs to provide these services, the Government of Alberta provides funding for rural municipalities through a variety of grant programs, many of which vary from year to year.

Since 2007, municipalities in Alberta have received significant provincial infrastructure funding through MSI, but this program is nearing its completion and municipalities are back at the table to work with the Government of Alberta to negotiate a future municipal funding agreement to replace MSI.

For the past decade, municipalities have used their MSI funding for a wide variety of project types such as roads and bridges, transit, water/wastewater, recreation facilities, and many other capital projects that support the provision of core municipal services. For this essential work to continue, municipalities need funding that is predictable, long-term, responsive, and adequate.

The Government of Alberta must work with the RMA to ensure the voices of Alberta's rural municipalities are at the table, and that the unique nature of rural municipalities are reflected in municipal funding programs. This includes considerations for the vast geography and low population density which characterizes Alberta's rural municipalities.

3. Transportation and infrastructure in rural Alberta

Rural roads and bridges serve as important arteries to help Alberta's economy grow by connecting natural resources to national and international transportation corridors. This critical infrastructure provides the oil, gas, forestry, and agriculture industries with access to the natural resources that they depend on. Rural roads and bridges also support access to services such as schools and healthcare and Alberta's breath-taking parks and natural areas. A safe and viable rural road and bridge network is key to supporting the provincial economy and strong rural communities.

Background Information

Rural Alberta drives Alberta's economy. Without these critical transportation links, Alberta's natural resources would be unable to reach key processing facilities and markets throughout Alberta, Canada, and beyond. The value of these key linkages can be measured by the fact that 41% of Alberta's public and private investment, and 26% of Alberta's GDP is in rural Alberta despite having only 18% of Alberta's population.

Rural municipalities collectively manage approximately 75% of roads and 60% of bridges in Alberta. This makes transportation and infrastructure a significant priority and a significant expense for rural municipalities. The cost to maintain Alberta's rural municipal transportation network requires funding from all levels of government, but this is an essential investment in not only local communities, but also in Alberta's and Canada's prosperity. Rural transportation systems are often the first link for Alberta's resources in a global supply chain and it takes the collective efforts of all levels of government to work together to support a safe, reliable, and well-funded rural resource network.



4. Supporting inter-municipal collaboration in rural Alberta

As Alberta's communities grow, the need for intermunicipal collaboration and regional cooperation is expanding. Therefore, it is imperative that rural municipalities are engaged and involved in regional decision-making, while maintaining the autonomy to represent the interests of their residents. Changes to the Municipal Government Act (MGA) require neighbouring municipalities to develop inter-municipal development plans (IDPs) and inter-municipal collaboration frameworks (ICFs). The mandated ICFs and IDPs will ensure that municipalities collaborate with each other, however there is an administrative cost to develop these agreements.

Background Information

Albertans expect municipalities to manage their tax dollars efficiently, which is why municipalities often work together to provide services in partnership with their regional neighbours. In a growing province like Alberta, inter-municipal collaboration is more important than ever. In 2016, the MGA was amended to require municipalities to coordinate and collaborate on shared services and planning through ICFs and IDPs.

As a general principle, intermunicipal collaboration is positive as it allows communities to pool resources and achieve economies of scale that would not otherwise be possible; however, mandated ICFs and IDPs strain municipal capacity and autonomy, especially for rural municipalities who may be required to complete agreements with as many as 20 neighbouring municipalities within a two-year timeframe.

Alberta's rural municipalities and the RMA seek the support from the Government of Alberta to ensure that collaboration between neighbouring municipalities can be undertaken in a way that does not strain municipal resources or capacity and strengthens existing relationships between municipalities.

5. Environmental stewardship

A specific duty of a municipality, as outlined in the Municipal Government Act (MGA), is to foster the well-being of the environment. For rural municipalities, this is especially important given that rural municipalities cover 85% of Alberta's land mass. This means that land-use planning and stewardship are important functions for all rural municipalities. In this context, stewardship includes

protecting the integrity of Alberta's land, water, and air.

Background Information

Alberta is the only province where the entire land mass, except for national and provincial parks, is municipally managed. Rural municipalities cover 86.5% of Alberta's total land mass and as a result, rural municipalities have a strong relationship with Alberta's land, water, and air, and by extension the broader environment.

As the government closest to rural Albertans, rural municipalities must balance the social, economic, and environmental benefits and costs of the decisions they make because they have a responsibility to provide a level of service to their residents in a manner that reflects the public interest. Rural municipalities practice environmental stewardship through land-use planning, water management, and growth planning. Each of these areas have implications for climate change and climate change-related policies and legislation.

Alberta's rural municipalities have the local knowledge to balance competing land-use interests. Through effective collaboration, Alberta's environmental resources can be protected while allowing for the growth and development in rural areas that helps drive Alberta's economy forward.

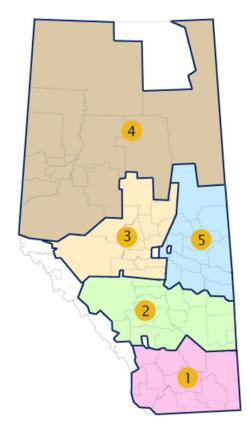
Albertans are proud of Alberta's vast, wild, and natural environment, and it is one of Alberta's most precious assets. Through effective land-use planning in rural areas, the Government of Alberta and rural municipalities are able balance the ecological needs of Alberta's natural environment with the economic growth and rural community development.



RMA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The RMA's membership is divided into five districts. The members of each district elect a representative onto the RMA Board of Directors. A President and Vice-President are also elected by the RMA's entire membership. The Board of Directors holds a formal meeting each month to set the RMA's strategic direction.

The RMA Board of Directors regularly interacts with MLAs through formal meetings and informally as issues arise. As a candidate for provincial office, feel free to contact any member of the Board of Directors for the rural view on a policy issue. Each Director is an expert on province-wide issues, as well as the key concerns within their district.



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RMA Vice-President

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Director: District 1, Foothills-Little Bow

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DISTRICT 1 RMA MEMBERS

Cardston County

Cypress County

Foothills County

County of Forty Mile

County of Lethbridge

County of Newell

MD of Pincher Creek

MD of Ranchland

MD of Taber

Vulcan County

County of Warner

MD of Willow Creek

Municipality of Crowsnest Pass



Director: District 2, Central

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DISTRICT 2 RMA MEMBERS

MD of Acadia

MD of Bighorn

Clearwater County

Kneehill County

Lacombe County

Mountain View County

County of Paintearth

Ponoka County

Red Deer County

Rocky View County

Special Areas Board

Starland County

County of Stettler

Wheatland County

Director: District 3, Pembina

Kathy Rooyakkers (Councillor, County of Wetaskawin) krooyakkers@RMAlberta.com | 780.514.9087

DISTRICT 3 MEMBERS

Athabasca County

County of Barrhead

Brazeau County

Leduc County

MD of Lesser Slave River

Thorhild County

Lac Ste. Anne County

Parkland County

Sturgeon County

Westlock County

County of Wetaskiwin

Woodlands County

Yellowhead County

Director: District 4, Northern

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DISTRICT 4 MEMBERS

Big Lakes County

Birch Hills County

Clear Hills County

MD of Fairview

County of Grande Prairie

MD of Greenview

Mackenzie County

County of Northern Lights

Northern Sunrise County

MD of Opportunity

MD of Peace

Saddle Hills County

MD of Smoky River

MD of Spirit River

RM of Wood Buffalo

Director: District 5, Edmonton East

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DISTRICT 5 MEMBERS

Beaver County

Camrose County

MD of Bonnyville

Flagstaff County

Lac La Biche County

Lamont County

County of Minburn

Smoky Lake County

County of St. Paul

MD of Provost

Strathcona County

County of Two Hills

County of Vermilion River

MD of Wainwright