

# RMA Spring 2019 Endorsed Resolutions

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## **Municipal Support for the Energy Industry**

Strathcona County

*Carried*

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### **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.**

### **Member Background**

#### **Schedule A**

The elements of the properly resourced evidence-based education and marketing initiative include:

- a. promote the world leading environmental, human-rights, and labour standards of the Alberta energy industry and its importance as an economic backbone of the country for jobs and supporting social programs;
- b. highlight our energy industry as one of one of innovation, economic opportunity, and environmental sustainability;
- c. educate the Canadian public on foreign de-marketing campaigns targeted at the Alberta and Canadian energy industry;
- d. educate the public on the reality that wind, solar and alternative sources of energy are only able to provide 1.1% of the world's energy needs;
- e. educate the Canadian public on the unethical and hypocritical aspects of the energy de-marketing campaigns; and

- f. educate the Canadian public on the benefits of the Alberta energy industry beyond traditional uses such as transportation, but as underlying element in over 6000 products from life-saving drugs, to computer components, to supporting alternative sources of energy.

**Additional member background:**

The importance of the energy industry to Canada and Alberta are obvious, as is the impact to the local, provincial, and federal economies when changes occur in the energy industry:

- every annual average \$1 increase in the Western Canadian Select – West Texas Intermediate differential above US \$22.40 per barrel costs the Government of Alberta \$210 million in royalties;
- for every US \$1 per barrel of oil discounted relative to world prices, there is an opportunity cost to the Canadian energy industry of \$1.4 billion per year;
- for every CAD \$1 million invested and generated in the Canadian energy sector, the Canadian GDP impact is CAD \$1.2 million; and
- for every direct job created in the Canadian energy sector, two indirect and three induced jobs in other sectors are created in Canada on average;

Given these numbers, the need for the governments of Canada and Alberta to support a strong and vibrant energy sector is clear.

However, a campaign has been evolving over the last decade with the strategy to land-lock the oil sands and prevent it from reaching the international market where it could fetch a high price per barrel. The US-funded campaign has allegedly given tens of millions to anti-pipeline Canadian green and social justice groups, including Greenpeace Canada, Idle No More, and the Pembina Institute, essentially campaigning to rebrand the Alberta oil sands as “dirty oil”. Most recently, references to “dirty oil” were articulated on December 7, 2017 by Quebec’s Premier Legault who talked about “dirty energy” in reference to the oil sands and on December 23, a CBS affiliate in San Francisco reported that tankers may soon be transporting “the heaviest, dirtiest oil on the planet, tar sands crude from Alberta, Canada.”

On October 12, 2018, the Northern Alberta Mayors and Reeves Caucus hosted a presentation by a Canadian researcher. The presentation summarized concerns about foreign interests funding environmental work in Canada with the intent to block development in the Canadian energy sector in order to protect foreign investments and market share. Further concerns included foreign charities providing inaccurate and misleading information on the Canadian energy sector via public relations campaigns.

While cross-border market competition and public relations marketing campaigns are an unavoidable reality in the energy sector, it is Strathcona County’s perspective that the best remedy for strong market competition and inaccurate public relations messaging affecting the Canadian energy sector is strong support and investment by the federal, provincial, and local governments. Comprehensive and relevant messaging by these important entities contributes to a more balanced public conversation in the marketplace and in political decision-making circles about the current and future impacts, disadvantages, and opportunities in Canada’s energy industry.

On December 2, 2018, the Government of Alberta mandated a short-term reduction in oil production to defend Alberta jobs and the value of energy resources. Starting in January 2019, production of raw crude oil and bitumen will be reduced by 325,000 barrels per day to address the storage glut, representing an 8.7 per cent reduction. The Alberta Energy Regulator will review the reduction amount every month to make sure production is in balance with transportation and storage capacity.

**RMA Background**

ER1-17F: Support for Trans Mountain Expansion Project

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.

The National Energy Board (NEB) response indicates that because the matters referenced in the resolution are currently before the NEB for decision, the NEB is unable to provide comment. Additionally, RMA has not yet received a response to this resolution from Natural Resources Canada.

The National Energy Board (NEB) response indicates that because the matters referenced in the resolution are currently before the NEB for decision, the NEB is unable to provide comment.

Additionally, RMA is awaiting a response from Natural Resources Canada.

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, this resolution is assigned a status of Accepted in Part, and RMA will continue to advocate on this issue at the federal level.

#### ER2-16S: Support for the Energy East Pipeline Project

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties demonstrate their support for the Energy East pipeline and inform the National Energy Board of this support;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties collaborate with the Government of Alberta and other municipal associations to emphasize the local, provincial, and national benefits that the Energy East pipeline would provide.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA and the Government of Alberta supported the Energy East Pipeline through various channels. For example, the RMA brought this issue to the attention of municipal counterparts in other provinces as well as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. The Government of Alberta has also been an advocate of greater market access. In October 2017, TransCanada Corporation announced it would no longer be proceeding with its proposed Energy East Pipeline. Although the Energy East Pipeline is not proceeding forward, the RMA has fulfilled the intent of this resolution and will continue to advocate for greater market access for Alberta's resources. This resolution is assigned the status of **Accepted**.

## Access to Agriculture-Specific Mental Health Resources

Lac Ste. Anne County

Carried

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### 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.**

### Member Background

#### *Agriculture is economically essential*

The foundation of Alberta's economy rests on petroleum and agriculture (Mansell & Percy, 1990). Put as simply as possible, we have seen historical slumps and peaks because of the weight placed on these industries. Therefore, when world oil supply increases, our oil prices drop, and the economy slows. Provincially, this impact can be mitigated when the agriculture industry remains strong; however, poor weather conditions locally or world market trends can impact prices and exports here (Mansell & Percy, 1990). Canada is vulnerable to world market trends as we are a net-exporter of the agricultural goods we produce. Our largest market is the United States, which accounts for 38% of total agri-food exports, followed in order by China, Japan, and Mexico (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry [AAF], 2017).

According to AAF (2017), Alberta's real gross domestic product (GDP) for agri-food industries is up 2.5% at \$6.5 billion, and Alberta exports of primary and processed agri-products reached a record of \$11.2 billion. Food and beverage manufacturing sales reached \$14.4 billion – a new high. Generally, both farm income and expenditures are increasing. Alberta continues to be the nation's largest beef producer, accounting for 41% of all cattle in Canada. Nationally, 75.7% of beef processing occurs in western Canada; the majority of that is focused in Alberta specifically.

Canada-wide, agriculture's impact is smaller but still substantial. According to Agriculture Canada, (2017), the agriculture industry generated \$111.9 billion of GDP, accounting for 6.7% of Canada's total GDP. Agriculture's GDP grew by 11%, compared to the Canadian economy growing by 7.8%. Approximately 2.3 million people were employed within the agriculture industry, accounting for 12.5% of Canadian employment (Agriculture Canada, 2017). Agricultural sales and farm incomes are at record highs, and Canada remains as one of the world's largest exporters of agricultural commodities. Grocery store sales, commercial foodservices sales, and employment in those sectors has increased. Farm market receipts for primary agriculture remained at record highs and net operating expenses dropped for the first time in six years (Agriculture Canada, 2017).

#### *Agriculture is stressful*

According to Fraser *et al.*, (2005), farming has one of the highest rates of suicide across all industries and is associated with a unique set of characteristics that can be hazardous to mental health. Included are

things such as difficult physical environments/weather, farm-family-business structure, economic difficulties, and many more. Physical and mental health are distinct entities, but often have related effects; farming is a physically dangerous occupation which innately causes stress to workers. Many work activities have inherent risks involved, with large moving equipment, large livestock and zoonotic disease, climbing bins or buildings, or applying various chemicals (Gerrard, 1998).

To quote Fraser *et al.*, (2005):

The physical stressors and hazards of the farm environment are compounded by the regulatory frameworks and economic dynamics of managing a farm business. Farming enterprises operate in a context of declining terms of trade for agricultural produce; volatile commodity markets; limited availability of off-farm employment; growing cost of machinery and production; loss of farm or livelihood due to crop or production failure; and changing government policy in relation to a range of economic and environmental issues (Elkind *et al.*, 1998).

98% of farms in Alberta are family owned and operated (Ontario Farm Animal Council, 2010). Working with your family does provide support, but in a farm setting it can impose demands not seen in other industries (Weigel *et al.*, 1987). Increased conflict is seen between family members as the lines between personal and business become blurred; family problems can become work problems, and vice versa. It has been shown that these family-related issues most adversely impact the younger generations (Marotz-Baden, 1988; Weigel *et al.*, 1987). British studies completed by Thomas *et al.* (2003), demonstrated that most farmers who reported moderate symptoms of depression were concerned with family problems. Contrastingly, other studies show that monetary issues were the predominant factor in suicide and depression; however, it is likely the interrelated nature of family, business, and money in farming that account for those contrasting results (Fraser *et al.*, 2005). Family support can provide a buffer and increase resilience in a farming community but needs to be acknowledged for its potential to simultaneously add stress.

Women in agriculture face a high level of stress, depression, and fatigue, at reportedly higher levels than men (Fraser *et al.*, 2005). This is primarily due to role conflict and high workloads. Farm women are traditionally in charge of household tasks, childcare, and running farm errands (Gallagher & Delworth, 2003), but are increasingly required to undertake more on- and off-farm work. Often this is referred to as the third shift – one shift on-farm, one shift off-farm, and one shift as a wife and mother.

As is well known and documented, farming is reliant on weather conditions, and is therefore vulnerable to extreme weather. Two snowfalls in September of an accumulated four inches of snow, that melted away within a few days, nearly derailed the 2018 agriculture season in the northwest region of Alberta (AFSC, 2018). Droughts throughout the rest of the province, and a cold spring led to a feed shortage large enough to more than triple the regular cost of livestock feed. In no other industry would these relatively small weather events cause such a widespread impact. As climate change progresses, weather patterns shift, and extreme weather events occur more commonly, farmers will only continue to feel the financial strain caused by these poorly timed events.

Farming families and those living in rural communities also have several obstacles in accessing mental health care. Some of the major barriers include but are not limited to: maldistribution of health care practitioners (many are in cities, and few are located in rural areas), poor roads, long distances, heightened visibility in small towns (gossip travels quicker through 100 people than through 10,000), and lastly the notion that farmers should be self-reliant and stoic. This only serves to increase the stigma around mental illness and asking for help.

#### *Stigma around mental health in agriculture*

The stigma around mental illness is fading over time as movements like Bell “Let’s Talk” and “Do More Agriculture” become more popular, but it is slower to fade within the agriculture industry. This stigma is an especially difficult obstacle for men to overcome due to the typical persona of a farming man (Phillipe *et al.*, 2017). The culture of agriculture is that – especially male – farmers are resilient, strong, stoic, relentless workers. Anecdotally, women often feel that since agriculture is a male-dominated industry, they need to perpetuate the ‘toughness’ that is traditionally masculine.

Historically, hegemonic studies concentrated on the fact that males have a lower sensitivity to signs of depression, reluctance to seek help, and violent expressions of distress, across all industries. This led to

an understanding of male socialization having negative impacts on mental health and well-being (Gough, 2013). The fallacy in that thinking was seen and currently, there is a shift towards a balanced approach to mental health. (Roy *et al.*, 2017).

Robertson (2007) presents an old-fashioned model of norms that stress health as a feminine concern. Therefore, to follow historical masculine norms, men should not speak of their health concerns. This would additionally mean that men should cope with their problems alone, and only seek external help as a last resort, or when pressured by others. To top that off, men are simultaneously expected to care for others as their protectors and providers. Although those pressures are being alleviated with the feminism movement, it can take generations before humans will adjust their way of thinking.

As stress builds, there is a large array of symptoms that can appear in a farmer and are easily associated with other causes. Some symptoms that can be directly related to high stress include, but are not limited to: fatigue, loss or gain of appetite and weight, irritability, panic attacks, and depression (Roy, *et al.*, 2017). There is a basic recognition that stress can cause these problems, so many farmers already have coping methods that they believe to be enough. Those methods include self-distraction, cognitive strategies, and maladaptive coping methods.

Farming – especially with livestock – requires working seven days a week, and there is usually little to no geographical work/home separation giving a feeling of being on-call all the time (Roy *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, self-distraction such as taking work breaks or vacations is crucial. Across the industry, the importance of breaks and vacations is recognized. Conversely, however, there is still a prevailing notion that farmers should be working all the time, since farming is so intensive. This causes a stigma towards taking those necessary breaks as being a ‘lazy’ farmer. Unfortunately, this social pressure is often exerted more by fellow farmers than other parts of society (Roy *et al.*, 2017).

On top of pressure to not take vacations, the advances in technology have increased the likelihood of farmers working in isolation as less people are needed to operate the businesses. A constant frustration in agriculture is that a farmer can have great technical performance and produce a high-quality product, but this does not always lead to financial success. Therefore, many farmers combat this through cognitive strategies; basically, they use humour, positive reframing, pride, values, and long-term perspectives and strategic planning to help them survive the bad times. According to Roy *et al.*, (2017) few farmers turned to religion as a coping mechanism.

The previously mentioned mechanisms are sometimes not enough, which is why farmers need more resources to turn to, before maladaptive strategies are chosen. These include substance abuse (excessive drugs or drinking, etc.), social isolation, and suicide. Fortunately, many farmers recognize that those coping methods are detrimental in the long term and try to avoid them (Roy *et al.*, 2017). Although the stigma around maintaining good mental health, and admitting to mental illness is fading over time, it is still heavily present, especially in male farmers (European Commission, 2011). Men often self-report their health as better than women with the same symptoms. This is consistent with the stereotype of farming men being traditionally masculine, and therefore may cause men to favour some of the negative coping methods.

#### *Saskatchewan's mental health link and funding model*

In Saskatchewan, agriculture is also a key industry. The Farm Stress Line operates through Mobile Crisis Services, a non-profit community-based organization that is governed by a volunteer board of directors. They contribute significant time to assist in direction of programs and services (Mobile Crisis Services, 2017). In the 2014/15 fiscal year, Mobile Crisis Services responded to a total of 23,286 calls. They receive funding from seven strategic funding partners from various departments of municipal and provincial governments (from the AGM report of Mobile Crisis Services, 2017). An additional method of funding is private, tax deductible donations, either by mail, online, or in person.

The Farm Stress Line provides confidential counselling, support, information, and referral services that respond to the needs of rural individuals (Mobile Crisis Services, 2017). The Farm Stress Line is toll-free, open all hours, and promises no call-display for anonymity. They help callers by clarifying problems and identifying possible solutions, identifying an organization or program best suited to a caller's problem, and listening. The Crisis Counsellors are qualified to help in areas including, but not limited to mental health, parenting, grief, youth issues, and finances.

In July 2012, the Farm Stress Line was officially moved to the Mobile Crisis Services responsibility (AGCanada, 2018). This gave the Farm Stress Line the ability to run 'round-the-clock' and 'one-on-one.' The focus of this service was to provide stressed farmers with the listening ear of their peers, who can understand what 21<sup>st</sup> century farming feels like (AGCanada, 2018). The Government of Saskatchewan wanted farmers and ranchers to know they can rely on those services if they need them.

Although it is not intended for mental health issues, Alberta already offers a similar platform with the program of the Ag-Info Centre: 310-FARM. This is an agriculture information line, with specifications towards crop and livestock education. They only answer inquiries during office hours, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday (AAF, 2018). However, this phone line is commonly used and well-known. Annually, 310-FARM takes up to 30,000 calls and receives 5000-6000 emails; the level of traffic is dependent on what programs are currently being offered (AAF, 2018).

Alberta does have mental health and support services available, with the most applicable option being 211. However, this is not an agriculture-specific help line, and as demonstrated previously farming has a plethora of stressors that are exclusive to agriculture; people outside of agriculture without that unique experience cannot empathize or understand a farmer or rancher's stress. Although 211 is a free service to those calling in, municipalities must pay to provide the service, and it is not offered widely throughout the province (Alberta 211, 2018). Additionally, 211 is an information and referral phone line. Although they are trained to deal with people in crisis, the focus of this phone line is to direct people to resources. Farmers and those living in rural areas are often directed to resources that are not locally available. Often there is either a wait list for the referred resource, or it can take time to have a call returned. Since 211 is not offered province-wide, someone may call in but not be informed of closer resources if their municipality does not participate in the program (Alberta 211, 2018). Convincing a farmer that they need help is difficult enough already (Roy *et al.*, 2017); when they are brave enough to ask, they should receive help that is appropriate for them.

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### **RMA Background**

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

## Light Weight Concrete Bridge Girders

County of Northern Lights

*Carried*

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### 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.**

### Member Background

The issue of these light weight concrete girders first came to the attention of municipalities in early 2017 at which time the RMA was involved in a steering committee tasked with resolving this issue. The steering committee was focused on providing oversight on the engineering assessment of a cross - section of the impacted bridges to determine the cause of the premature deterioration.

The Association's involvement in the steering committee ended in the spring of 2017. When the engineering assessments were complete, Alberta Transportation advised the committee that they would weigh legal options internally. Since that time the Minister has advised that the department has no plans to pursue legal action on the matter and that Alberta Transportation "would not have been party to any such contracts for bridges managed by municipalities, and the standard girder design as specified by the department at that time was not the cause of the problem that has arisen.

Any legal action would be required to start within two years of the issue coming to light, and as it was identified in January 2017, that time limit has passed.

Minister Mason stated at the 2018 Fall convention that the department "is open to continuing discussions with municipalities to find a solution." Since that time all requests for assistance have been met with the department's stance that they are not responsible for this issue and municipalities are able to proceed with legal action should they wish.

The County of Northern Lights is not looking to undertake legal action against any contractor as it is not faulty work, but rather faulty material approved by the department.

The County of Northern Lights has five of the 36 affected bridges, second only to Alberta Transportation's nine. One of these bridges is located on our busiest resource road leading from several gravel pits, and it is currently rated as a two.

We believe this issue needs to be viewed similar to a product recall where the public's safety is in danger. The issue is more about preserving public confidence

in a time where confidence in government is declining. There have been many news stories from around the world and within Canada, of bridge collapses. This leads to the public's trust which has been shaken because they believed that the governments are protecting them from poor bridge construction practices, which can put lives at risk.

This issue requires a plan and dedicated funding to replace all the girders in the province that have this problem. This would be proactive and put the province ahead of the problem. If the problem is not addressed in 2019, there will likely be bridge closures and the public will then start paying attention to the depth and breadth of this problem. If municipal and provincial governments wait until then, any plan will truly be reactionary, and too late.

Attached are:

- Letters sent to the Minister of Transportation, from several impacted municipalities and Alberta Transportation's replies
- Samples of current bridge ratings
- A list of the affected municipalities

See following page for attachments.

**RMA Background**

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

## **Bighorn Country Proposal Consultation**

Brazeau County

*Carried*

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### **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.**

### **Member Background**

The Government of Alberta announced the Bighorn Country Proposal on November 23, 2018. Any previous consultation on provincial planning in the Bighorn Country had occurred in relation to the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan consultation which stakeholders had not listed as a priority. Brazeau County has heard the concerns of many residents and questions are being asked about the implementation of the Bighorn Country Proposal and the impacts it will have on industry and future development, which is vital to the Province of Alberta.

On January 5, 2019, Alberta Environment and Parks Minister Shannon Phillips released a statement that a public information session scheduled to be held in Drayton Valley on January 7<sup>th</sup> had been cancelled.

In support of the concerns expressed from Albertans regarding the consultation process the Government of Alberta has been utilizing for the Bighorn Country Proposal, and the cancellation of the public input sessions, it is of the utmost importance that the RMA consider urging the Government of Alberta to delay the proposal until such a time that a comprehensive consultation occurs. The recently announced telephone townhalls are not suitable replacements.

A comprehensive consultation process for all Albertans is necessary on this and future proposals to ensure the responsible development of public lands in a balanced approach with economic and environmental sustainability.

On January 5, after the cancellation of the January 7 public information session, Brazeau County issued the following statement:

"The exclusion of municipalities from the formal consultation process is a disturbing precedent and Brazeau County would like to see the Province of Alberta develop a revised consultation process for this and all future proposals."

On November 26, 2018, Brazeau County Council passed the following Resolution:

Bighorn Country Tourism Situational Awareness Session

1201/18-11-26 Moved by M. Gressler that Council oppose the Bighorn Country

Tourism proposal as presented by the Minister.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Additionally, on January 5, 2019, Brazeau County Council issued a statement in response to the cancellation of the public input sessions, and that statement is attached as Appendix A.

#### *Appendix A*

Bighorn Country Proposal Consultation

Statement Issued by Brazeau County on January 5, 2019

Brazeau County's Response to the Cancellation of the Public Input Sessions for Bighorn Country.

On behalf of Brazeau County Council I wish to express our extreme disappointment in Minister Phillips's statement and her Ministry's decision to cancel the Public Input Sessions scheduled. Brazeau County has taken great pride in the equal balance of stewardship and economic development of our lands including those proposed to fall within the Bighorn Country Public Land Use Zone proposal. While Brazeau County Council maintains our position that we wish to be removed from the proposal, we are more deeply saddened to be proven correct in so much as this government has not carried out significant nor effective public consultation; the amount of material released in various locations by the dual ministries of Environment and Parks and Tourism, has led to onerous and time consuming research that is discourteous to peoples times and lives. Cancellation of the public input session, specifically the one for Drayton Valley scheduled for January 7<sup>th</sup> is further entrenching our Council's opinion that the Ministry of Parks is unwilling to listen to face to face local opposition or suggestions for the Bighorn Country Proposal.

#### **RMA Background**

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

## **Amendments Required for Crown Land Recreation Disposition Applications and Renewals**

County of Grande Prairie

*Carried as amended*

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### **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.**

### **Member Background**

Historically, not for profit organizations that hold dispositions on Crown land have demonstrated excellent stewardship of the land, while simultaneously encouraging public participation in physical activities for all levels of ability, providing outdoor education opportunities and demonstrating environmental protection. Dispositions are typically long-term with not for profits investing capital funds to develop approved infrastructure on the Crown lands. Maintenance of the disposition falls solely to the not for profit organization, a majority of which are volunteer driven.

To date, the County of Grande Prairie has heard concerns about the disposition renewal process from several not for profit groups including Camp Tamarack (an outdoor activities center for persons with disabilities), Wapiti Nordic Ski Club and Beaverlodge Boys and Girls Camp.

The new requirement to provide a one-thousand-dollar deposit per acre upon disposition renewal is not something that most organizations are aware of until their lease renewal comes around and therefore they have not typically budgeted for it. Not for profits typically operate on a break-even basis and do not usually have reserves for unforeseen expenses such as this. They are being forced to reallocate funds away from core programming to cover disposition deposit and renewal expenses or seeking funding from local municipalities. Alternatively, the not for profit group may seek to have the municipality apply for the

disposition in their name (AEP does not require a deposit from municipalities), and then request that the municipality sublease the Crown land back to the NFP group.

The requirement to upgrade survey plans to AEP current standards can only be achieved by not for profits if they engage a professional surveying company, which in itself presents an expense of approximately \$10,000. This too places an unexpected and additional financial burden on the not for profit organization, forcing them to seek additional funding from municipalities or increase their fundraising efforts.

The process to apply and complete an AEP application for Crown land dispositions is complicated and not easily understood by the general public. Not for profits must either engage a land management company to complete the application on their behalf at an expense of \$2,000 - \$5,000 (in addition to First Nations consulting fees of approximately \$2,000) or request help from local municipalities via their administrative staff.

All of the above requirements discourage not for profit organizations from leasing lands from the Crown and could even result in these community groups ceasing operations completely. The new requirements also represent another example of provincial downloading without resources or funding.

Not for profit organizations occupying Crown recreation dispositions benefit Albertans in their health, wellness and education as well as maintaining Crown lands to provincial standards which otherwise may not be maintained.

Amendments to AEP's current policies, requirements and processes are required to promote fairness and transparency to the not for profits. Municipalities are not being asked to meet the same security deposit requirements as the not for profits to maintain, expand or obtain new dispositions.

### **RMA Background**

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.



## **Prevent Implementation of Seed Royalty on Producers for Farm Saved Seed**

County of Northern Lights

*Carried*

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### **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".**

### **Member Background**

"Consultation" meetings on the issue of royalties on farm-saved seed took place recently in western Canada with the final meeting being held at the Renaissance Airport Hotel in Nisku on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018. This concern has come to light following the regional consultations.

#### *Issues*

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is considering a proposal in which farmers could pay royalties on seeds they produce.
- Royalties are being recommended by Seed Synergy, Canadian Seed Trade Association (CTSA) and Canadian Seed Growers Association (CSGA) to increase funds to support programs for wheat and other cereal breeding programs.
- There is currently no information about how much a royalty could possibly be, how it would be collected or how funds collected from royalties would be dispersed.
- There is potential for \$100 million plus to be collected annually from royalties on farm saved seed.
- The Government of Canada has continued to put money in to wheat breeding and hopefully that continues. However, it is possible that they eventually back out of funding seed developers and place the financial onus on the producer paying through royalty profits.
- AAFC has already completed consultations with farmers across western Canada seeking feedback on two proposed royalty models, farm saved seed contracts and end-point royalties

- The two models proposed are:
  - Model one: royalty collection enabled by contracts. When buying seed of a new variety, a producer would have to sign a contract agreeing to pay a trailing royalty on farm saved seed. Part of the contractual obligation would be reporting the annual use of the farm saved seed.
  - Model two: would allow for a national non-refundable levy on all the newer varieties. These royalties would then be forwarded to the breeders based on their market share. The proposal calls for the existing provincial check-off systems to be leveraged for collection.
- Royalty rates under both models have yet to be determined but regardless of which system is implemented, farmers would be paying more for seed each time they plant a crop using farm saved seed.
- The Government of Canada plan could see royalties charged on farm saved seed begin within two to three years.
- At this point in time, the *Plant Breeders Rights Act* allows for end-point royalties, although breeders cannot have an End Point Royalty in a year when they have charged a royalty on the certified seed.
- Currently, industry estimates put certified seed use at only 20% or 25% for wheat.
- Producers will buy certified seed of a new variety and save their own seed for several subsequent years before trying out a new variety.

As of January 10, 2019, Agriculture and Forestry Minister Oneil Carlier has indicated that “he is a big advocate of research but unclear why multibillion-dollar international companies need money from our farmers for their research when they are already extremely profitable companies.” Minister Carlier is not convinced collecting royalties is the right approach and is concerned the cost of research will be downloaded on to farmers.

The Western Grains Research Foundation’s Mission is: WGRF will continue to build on its unique strength of being a farmer-funded, farmer-directed organization focused on funding field crop research for western Canadian farmers.

According to the 2017 Annual Report - Statement of Financial Position as of December 31, 2017, the WGRF balance was just under \$180 million, including the Endowment Fund which has just under \$132 million.

More details about the proposed royalties on farm saved seed can be found in the attached articles from the Western Producer.

**RMA Background**

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

## **Solar Power Reclamation**

MD of Taber

*Carried as amended*

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### **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.**

### **Member Background**

As end-of-life remediation and reclamation liability has evolved to become the top priority for the Alberta Energy Regulator in the oil and gas context, Alberta Environment and Parks and the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) require details regarding the proposed decommissioning and site reclamation of wind and solar projects. In the absence of a reclamation standard for wind and solar, the AUC stated that it would review and approve reclamation plans for wind and solar power plants, if no such standard is adopted in the future.

The AUC also recently indicated that it expected the Government of Alberta to issue a Ministerial Order requiring project proponents to provide reclamation security for solar projects. In the future, Alberta may consider setting up a statutory framework similar to the Alberta Orphan Well Fund and Association to address end-of-life liability for wind and solar power plants.

## **RMA Background**

20-18F: Decommissioning Costs for Wind Energy Developments

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.

DEVELOPMENT: RMA has not yet received a government response to this resolution.

## **Reinstatement of the Municipal Officer's Expense Allowance**

Clearwater County

Carried

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### **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.**

### **Member Background**

Government of Canada - Municipal officer's expense allowance:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/businesses/topics/payroll/benefits-allowances/municipal-officer-s-expense-allowance.html>

Bill C-44: <http://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/bill/C-44/royal-assent>

Federation of Canadian Municipalities: *Change in "One-Third" Federal Exemption for Elected Officials – A Guide for Canadian Municipalities* [https://auma.ca/sites/default/files/fcm\\_taxexemption\\_guide.pdf](https://auma.ca/sites/default/files/fcm_taxexemption_guide.pdf).

### **RMA Background**

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

## **Watershed Planning and Advisory Council Funding**

Northern Sunrise County

*Carried as amended*

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### **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.**

### **Member Background**

The proportion of the complete budget that this AEP grant fulfills is different for each of the 11 WPACs in Alberta. For many (such as the Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance [MPWA] of which Northern Sunrise County is a member) it constitutes at least 90% of operating budgets. This grant is meant to be the core funding for staffing, office and organization function.

Applications are typically requested by the Government of Alberta between the end of January to early March, and most frequently in mid-February. In the application, it indicates that responses will be returned within 60 days, but this has never been the case. Funding responses and funds have been received anywhere from the last week of May to early August, most often in late June.

MPWA provides the lead on a number of projects and education events and is forced to put many of these events on hold during some critical work periods because of funding uncertainty. In 2018, funding was at critical levels by mid-April and the MPWA was ready to lay off staff when the AEP grant funding finally arrived in early July. When an application is submitted for a 12-month program, but funds arrive after the first quarter and need to be used before year end, funding flow is an issue.

Further, finding competent and qualified staff is difficult. Once time and effort has been spent to train staff, organizations wish to keep them employed. Inconsistent funding and the prospect of having to lay staff off creates a poor work environment and slows down projects during important periods.

The work of the WPACs is important and the Government of Alberta has indicated this by the Minister's announcement of the \$3.2 million/year agreement. Unfortunately, there continues to be issues regarding timeliness and funding breakdown.

The WPACs have many stakeholders and partners involved in various projects. It is difficult to move some of these projects forward in efficient and timely manner when the AEP partnership, regarding core funding, causes stumbling blocks.

### **RMA Background**

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

## **Strategic Direction for the RMA**

RMA Executive Resolution

*Carried*

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### **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.**

### **RMA Background**

The RMA last underwent a strategic direction-setting process in 2014 to revise the mission, vision, values, roles and strategic priorities to guide the RMA's activities from March 2014 until December 2018.

To obtain member input to refresh the RMA's strategic direction, members were invited to provide input at the Fall 2018 Convention. Similar opportunities were provided for the RMA board. These strategic planning sessions invited valuable input from our members and board, and resulted in the development of a proposed strategic direction to guide the planning and activities of the RMA. The RMA's draft strategic direction was distributed to the membership for feedback in February 2019.

The purpose of the strategic direction is to establish an updated vision and mission for the association, as well as values, roles, and strategic priorities that will best position the RMA to continue to serve the needs of its members in the future. It is intended to reflect the RMA's diverse member offerings and its role as a provider of advocacy and business services. The strategic direction will form the basis upon which the RMA's strategic plan will be built, to identify goals, initiatives and measures in alignment with key direction provided by our members.

The draft strategic direction is included in this resolution background.



## ***Draft Strategic Direction***

The following vision, mission, values, roles and strategic priorities will guide the planning and activities for the RMA.

### **VISION**

Strong vibrant rural communities

### **MISSION**

Strengthening rural Alberta by supporting our members through effective representation and valued services

### **VALUES**

The RMA is committed to the following values:

- Leading in a proactive, collaborative, and accountable manner
- Being transparent and relationship focused
- Interacting with diplomacy and respect
- Communicating with intention and authenticity
- Continuously improving as a learning organization

### **ROLES**

We represent and serve our members by:

- Championing and advocating on municipal and rural issues
- Cultivating strategic and collaborative partnerships
- Facilitating networking and educational opportunities
- Delivering responsive business services
- Providing procurement expertise and risk management solutions
- Being a resource of credible knowledge

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

We are focused on the following strategic priorities:

- Engaging our members to identify emerging issues and needs
- Providing education and sharing best practices
- Conducting research to understand issues and support evidence-based decision making
- Elevating the rural profile by communicating and promoting rural and municipal issues
- Providing tailored business services that are valued by our members to meet their needs
- Ensuring a strong organization through insightful leadership and effective internal operations
- Increasing RMA's influence by demonstrating the purpose and value of the organization and those that it represents

## Update of the Provincial Code of Practice for Compost Facilities

Wheatland County

Carried

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### 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.**

### Member Background

The jurisdiction to regulate compost facilities lies with Alberta Environment and Parks under the authority of the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* (Act), *Waste Control Regulation* (A.R. 192/1996) (Regulation), and Code of Practice for Compost Facilities (Code). The Government of Alberta also has a document titled Standards for Composting Facilities in Alberta (Standards) which is not legally enforceable as it is not tied to the Regulation or Act. In recent conversations with Alberta Environment and Parks it was determined that the Standards, published in 2007, were originally written with the intent of replacing the current Code. According to staff, the project lost priority at the time and was not pushed along the final steps necessary for the content of the Standards to become the new and enforceable Code. Through this resolution, Wheatland County wishes to highlight the importance of the work that was done to update the Code and return priority to the project so that it may be completed.

Our attention to compost facility regulation is drawn from a recent case of conflict between County residents and a compost facility within our municipality. In this case, the facility began operation in 1997, when it was determined that a development permit was not required due to the agricultural nature of the activity. Since then the facility has evolved, and in recent years resident complaints about intense odours, nuisances like flies, high seagull populations, and blowing garbage, and concerns about other potential issues like ground and surface water impacts, have become common. Because the facility has both Alberta Environment and

Parks registration via the Code, and in-writing confirmation that they do not require a development permit, the municipality is very limited in its ability to act to alleviate the concerns of its residents and must rely on Alberta Environment and Parks' ability to manage and monitor the impacts of the facility. While Alberta Environment and Parks is doing what they can according to the Code, we are disappointed that the content of the Standards cannot be enforced. Wheatland County believes that the additional requirements included in the Standards are an improvement that would increase our confidence in Alberta Environment and Parks' ability to both resolve concerns in cases like this, and proactively prevent similar cases from occurring in the future.

### **RMA Background**

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

## **Making Children's Healthcare a Priority in Alberta**

MD of Opportunity

*Carried*

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### **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.**

### **Member Background**

In 2018, the Stollery Children's Hospital saw over 260,000 children as patients. The vision of the Stollery Children's Hospital and Alberta Children's Hospital is to continue to provide services that will help sick kids and their families get better in the quickest time possible. This is accomplished by providing care close to home. This is why the Stollery Foundation would like to partner with communities across the province. The vision is to partner with communities to build a Network of Care, where children services can be offered in local hospitals across the province so kids can heal close to home.

The Government of Alberta, as well as opposition parties, are supportive of expanding this concept. What is needed now is support from communities from across the province.

### **RMA Background**

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.