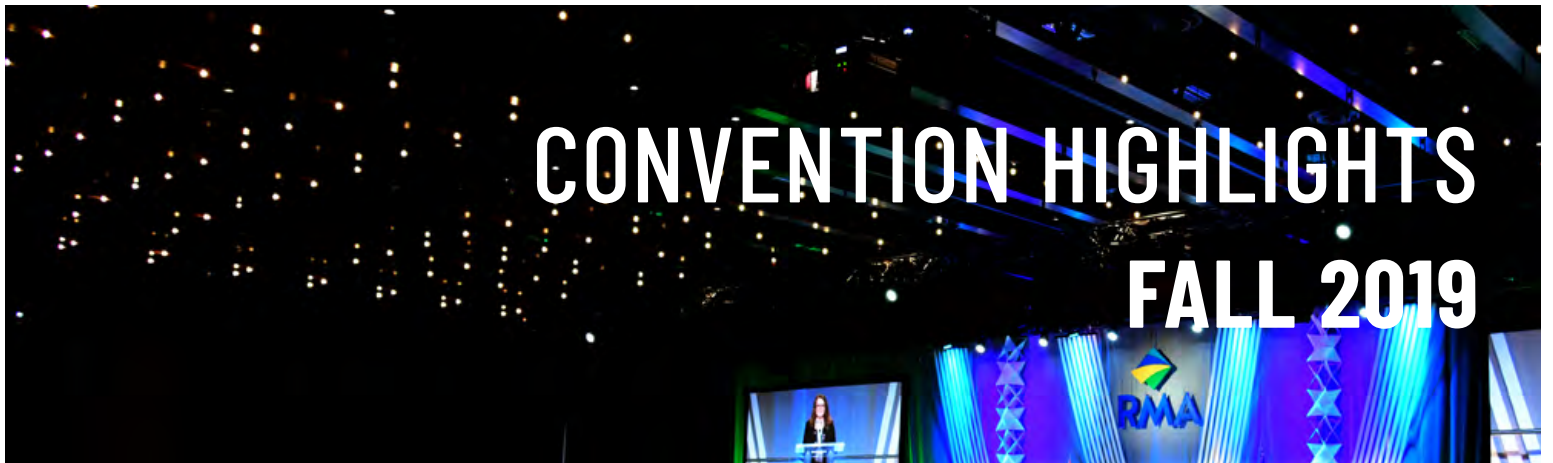




# CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS FALL 2019



**RMA**  
RURAL MUNICIPALITIES  
of ALBERTA



## PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

RMA's Fall 2019 Convention began with opening ceremonies and the semi-annual address from RMA President Al Kemmere, which touched on several issues important to rural municipalities. Due to the provincial election last spring, 2019 saw the introduction of a rare fall provincial budget. President Kemmere provided an overview of one of the most significant components of the budget: the introduction of the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF). The LGFF will provide municipalities with long-term, legislated infrastructure funding following the expiry of the current Municipal Sustainability Initiative in 2021 – 2022. RMA appreciates the Government of Alberta's commitment to providing consistent municipal funding; however, RMA has expressed concern that the LGFF will grow at only 50% of provincial revenues each year. Municipalities should share equally in the province's economic growth, especially considering the important role that municipal infrastructure plays in supporting industrial and commercial development.

In recent months, there has been a perception by some that some rural municipalities are excessively wealthy based on the level of their financial reserves. President Kemmere introduced RMA's most recent report, *Understanding Municipal Financial Reserves*, as an important tool to counter the misperception that financial reserves equal wealth by explaining the important role that reserves play in municipal planning and capital investment, and their universal popularity among municipalities of all types and sizes in Alberta.

Another big issue impacting members recently has been the Government of Alberta's proposed changes to the police costing model. President Kemmere expressed appreciation to members for vocalizing their concerns with the province's initial proposal, and to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General for his willingness to revisit the initial proposal based on the feedback received. RMA is hoping for further engagement on this issue and is

anticipating a final model to be shared with municipalities prior to the end of 2019 and implemented in the 2020 provincial budget.

With October's federal election resulting in no Alberta MPs representing the governing Liberal Party, ensuring effective representation of Alberta-specific issues will be an ongoing challenge for RMA and other provincial organizations. In late October, the Prime Minister reached out to the premiers of Alberta and Saskatchewan, as well as the mayors of the four large cities to build connections with our two provinces. President Kemmere explained that in response to the Prime Minister's engagement, RMA worked with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities to request that the Prime Minister engage the two associations to understand the rural Alberta and Saskatchewan perspective.

President Kemmere provided an update on the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). Recently, several RMA members have expressed concern with FCM's awareness of and positions on the economic issues facing Western Canada. RMA, led by President Kemmere, has worked hard in recent years to ensure that FCM considers the rural municipal and Western Canadian perspective on policy issues. Thanks in part to RMA's efforts, FCM has announced the formation of the Western Economic Solutions Task Force (WEST) to develop solutions for how FCM can play a role in addressing the economic challenges facing western Canadian municipalities. WEST will include FCM representatives, as well as big city mayors and municipal association presidents, from the three prairie provinces.

President Kemmere concluded his report by emphasizing the importance of member input and strong relationships to RMA's success and thanking members for their efforts in engaging with RMA board and staff to support the association's advocacy efforts.





## OPENING CEREMONIES

RMA's fall 2019 convention kicked off with a great rendition of O Canada from Strathcona County resident Peyton Klassen. Delegates then received greetings from City of Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson, who spoke on the importance of continued partnerships and collaboration between Alberta's urban and rural municipalities. The opening ceremonies were also an opportunity for the RMA's board of directors, as well as honoured fraternal delegates and dignitaries, to be recognized for their contributions to rural Alberta. The opening ceremonies also allowed delegates to remember former RMA members who have passed away since the previous convention. The opening ceremonies wrapped up with long service awards. These awards recognize rural municipal administrators and elected officials for their dedication. Awards were handed out for nine, 15, 25, and 30 years of service.

## R.W. HAY AWARD

The R.W. Hay Award is supported jointly by RMA and the Society of Local Government Managers (SLGM). The award demonstrates appreciation for the chief administrative officers who play such a critical role in implementing council visions in rural municipalities across Alberta. This year's recipient was Sheila Kitz, CAO of the County of St. Paul. In addition to her strong leadership at the County of St. Paul, Ms. Kitz has vigorously supported effective municipal administration through participation in the Alberta Rural Municipal Administrators Association (ARMAA) and province-wide committees. Ms. Kitz has also been a strong advocate for the Municipal Internship Program, having hosted four interns over the past ten years. RMA and SLGM are pleased to have presented this year's R.W. Hay Award to Ms. Kitz!



## ADDRESS FROM THE PROVINCE: HONOURABLE KAYCEE MADU, MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

Kaycee Madu, Minister of Municipal Affairs, provided an update on the reduction and phase-out of the Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) and the creation of the replacement program, the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF). While MSI will be reduced in the final two years of its operation, the LGFF will provide predictable, legislated funding for municipalities. This funding will increase each year as provincial revenue grows.

Additionally, Minister Madu announced that cannabis production facilities will no longer be classified as agricultural operations for property tax purposes. These facilities use municipal resources more intensely than traditional agricultural operations; this change in assessment will allow municipalities to appropriately tax cannabis production facilities for the services they use. This has been an advocacy priority of RMA for several years and is great news for those rural municipalities hosting cannabis production facilities.



## HONOURABLE DALE NALLY, ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF NATURAL GAS

Dale Nally, Associate Minister of Natural Gas, provided delegates with an update of the natural gas sector and how the government is attracting investment into Alberta. Associate Minister Nally spoke to the province's efforts undertaken to ensure Alberta's resources reach international markets through new infrastructure projects, reducing corporate taxes, reducing red tape surrounding the approval process for projects, and expanding storage for natural gas. These efforts have resulted in natural gas prices staying above \$2.00 in recent months.

Associate Minister Nally also spoke on the *Roadmap to Recovery: Reviving Alberta's Natural Gas Industry*, in which industry provided key recommendations to the government on how to recover Alberta's energy sector. The report made 48 recommendations, 26 of which have been adopted by the government. The government will be meeting with industry to review the remaining recommendations and discuss next steps.



## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### DR. GORDON MCINTOSH

Dr. Gordon McIntosh delivered a powerful presentation on the importance of strong group dynamics and positive leadership in effective municipal decision-making and governance. Harnessing his background and experience in municipal government, leadership training, and education, Dr. McIntosh provided great advice as to how council and senior administration can work together effectively to pursue common goals.

### JEREMIAH BROWN

Jeremiah Brown told his story of winning an Olympic silver medal as a member of the Canadian men's eight rowing team at the London 2012 Olympic Games. A former commercial banker with a big dream, he is one of few Olympians ever to have started learning his sport only four years before winning a medal at the Olympics. Jeremiah spoke about the importance of being focused on a goal, working as a team, and the role his coaches played in helping him succeed.

## ADDRESS FROM ALBERTA'S OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: MLA JOE CECI

Joe Ceci, MLA for Calgary-Buffalo and the Municipal Affairs Critic for Alberta's Official Opposition, provided delegates with an update of the NDP's work of holding the government accountable to Albertans. MLA Ceci highlighted what the NDP achieved during their four-year term as government, such as building schools, funding education, and how they worked closely with rural communities on projects such as recreation centres and grant delivery.

MLA Ceci also expressed how the NDP was standing up for Albertans in their opposition role. Some examples included: NDP concern over the 2019 provincial budget, how spending cuts and tax breaks are not bringing new energy investments into Alberta, and the elimination of the Wildland Firefighter Rappel Program. MLA Ceci also mentioned the NDP's opposition to proposed changes to the police costing formula. MLA Ceci concluded his speech by stating that the NDP is still a partner and advocate to rural Albertans, and the party will continue to fight for the interests of all Albertans.

## IRENE MARTIN-LINDSAY & JAMES NIBOURG, ALBERTA SENIORS COMMUNITIES & HOUSING ASSOCIATION

The Alberta Seniors Communities and Housing Association (ASCHA) advocates on behalf of the owners and operators of seniors housing in Alberta. ASCHA Executive Director Irene Martin-Lindsay and Central Region Vice President James Nibourg jointly presented on the importance of an effective regional housing program to the viability of rural communities. Some of ASCHA's specific advocacy priorities include the need for the Government of Alberta to recognize that an improved seniors housing system is the solution to the crisis in seniors care, greater integration of housing and health services, a reallocation of resources from acute care to preventative community care, as well as clearer language and terminology around seniors housing to create a more inclusive dialogue on the issue.

## HONOURABLE GRANT HUNTER, ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF RED TAPE REDUCTION

Grant Hunter, Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction, provided delegates with an update of the Government of Alberta's initiatives for reducing red tape. Completed initiatives include updating the application form for disaster recovery funding that has allowed municipalities to make payments faster, streamlining the application process for several municipal grant programs, allowing municipalities to offer multi-year tax incentives, and making other changes to support more efficient government.

Associate Minister Hunter explained that redundant and unnecessary regulations and processes prevent business from attracting investment and governments from efficiently spending public funds.





## HONOURABLE JASON KENNEY, PREMIER OF ALBERTA

Jason Kenney, Premier of Alberta, concluded the convention with an address that covered a wide range of issues. The address opened with an overview of Alberta's recent economic struggle and its human cost in the form of increased crime, homelessness, and substance abuse. He explained that while economic struggles are the cause of the social issues being experienced, strengthening the economy is a large part of the solution, and the current government is taking aggressive steps to bring jobs and industry back to Alberta. Initiatives such as reducing regulations by one-third, reducing taxes for industry, and allowing royalty guarantees and property tax incentives are being taken to increase Alberta's competitiveness worldwide, and especially in comparison to several US states.

Premier Kenney also described the red tape reduction activities that the province is undertaking to help municipalities operate more efficiently, including enabling legislation to allow property tax incentives and other changes to municipal operational requirements. The province sees municipalities as being an important part of "Team Alberta" that can contribute to economic growth by making local fiscal and planning decisions to help bring businesses and jobs back to the province through reducing red tape and lowering costs for industrial and commercial development.

Premier Kenney explained that while he and his government were working hard to address Alberta's economic challenges, the situation is serious and changes need to happen quickly. Reducing the province's debt is critical to keeping costs low for industry while still offering quality public services, so modest budget cuts are required to move towards a balanced budget and ultimately eliminate interest payments. Finding efficiencies in government and the delivery of public services is not only possible, but required to support future prosperity. Premier Kenney explained that the 2.8% cut over four years in overall spending in the recent provincial budget is a manageable sacrifice that is the first step in rebuilding the provincial economy and developing a more efficient provincial government.

Premier Kenney concluded his address by emphasizing that while Alberta can take steps to streamline government and rebuild the economy, complete recovery depends on a fair deal federally. The recently-announced Fair Deal Panel will examine how Alberta can maximize its leverage with the federal government to get pipelines built and ensure that Alberta's contributions to Canada are properly recognized.





## MINISTERIAL FORUM

RMA hosted several members of the Government of Alberta Cabinet on our convention stage. The ministers addressed questions from RMA members on several topics, including:

- ◆ Unpaid oil and gas property taxes
- ◆ Administrative challenges of ICF and IDP processes
- ◆ Programs to help mitigate financial burdens on victims of crime
- ◆ Concerns over repeat offenders
- ◆ Growth management boards
- ◆ Crown land sales
- ◆ Mental health programs for farmers
- ◆ Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program funding
- ◆ Lottery fund concerns
- ◆ REDA funding
- ◆ Cattle producer concerns on imitation meat
- ◆ Provincial broadband strategy
- ◆ Wait times for agriculture inspections
- ◆ Funding for the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program
- ◆ Economic development and innovation in rural Alberta
- ◆ Land use planning and service delivery in rural areas
- ◆ Tourism strategy for rural Alberta
- ◆ Police costing model
- ◆ Funding for rural post-secondary institutions
- ◆ Funding for rural hospitals
- ◆ Concerns over Bill 207
- ◆ Rural homelessness
- ◆ Modernization of rural schools
- ◆ Sustainable funding for municipalities
- ◆ Long wait times for approvals from Alberta Environment and Parks



## BROADBAND DISCUSSION

A three-person panel with representation from Service Alberta (Stephen Bull), CCI Wireless (Jordan Young), and SouthGrow Regional Initiative (Peter Casurella) discussed the challenges and opportunities regarding rural broadband. Topics ranged from a provincial broadband strategy, to the decreasing time lag between urban and rural broadband speeds, to the positive cost-benefit-analysis of investing in rural broadband to attract economic development. RMA members asked about the development of 5G internet and issues related to line of sight when using wireless distribution networks.

## RURAL CRIME PANEL

RMA's rural crime panel featured four experts with different perspectives on both the causes and solutions to Alberta's rural crime challenges: Red Deer College's Becky Wylie-Jardine, Peter Tewfik of the RCMP, Jan Fox of REACH Edmonton, and Red Deer County Councillor Jean Bota. The panellists shared their insights on many aspects of rural crime, including the root causes, the challenges of measuring crime, current initiatives being undertaken by the Government of Alberta and RCMP to strategically address rural crime, and the role that municipalities can play in working with police and other stakeholders to support safe rural communities.



## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Seven breakout sessions were held at the RMA Fall Convention. They included:

### **WHAT IS BLACK AND WHITE, AND GREY ALL OVER? NAVIGATING THE POLITICAL / ADMINISTRATIVE INTERFACE WITH GORDON MCINTOSH**

Gordon McIntosh provided an engaging and interactive session that explored the relationship between elected officials and municipal staff. The political / administrative interface is akin to driving a car. If the wheels are not aligned, we add wear to tires and use extra fuel. Likewise, if council and staff are not aligned, organizational efforts

are diverted from the strategic matters requiring civic leadership. Dr. McIntosh provided in-depth resources for evaluating this relationship, along with a checklist that municipal councillors can use to identify and develop strategies to address or enhance real-time governance and organizational matters of interest.

### **ASSET MANAGEMENT – NARROWING THE GAP BETWEEN SERVICE DELIVERY COSTS AND REVENUE**

As Alberta municipalities continue to face challenges related to grant funding and taxation, it is now more important than ever for councils and staff to work together to gather and use information to make evidence-supported decisions on infrastructure and service delivery spending. The workshop featured Christina Hopkins, an engineer at Urban Systems who specializes in asset management training, along with MD of Taber Deputy Reeve Jennifer Crowson, and MD of Taber Director of Infrastructure Craig Pittman. The panellists

discussed the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating an asset management “mindset” into municipal decision-making. Much of the workshop focused on the importance of understanding the gap between service levels and revenue, and considering how municipalities can adjust service levels, risk, and costs to narrow the gap and offer more sustainable services. The workshop concluded with an overview of the MD of Taber’s story of narrowing the gap and better integrating an asset management mindset into their decision-making process.

### **DON'T LET BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO YOUR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS - RMA INSURANCE (CAO FOCUSED)**

RMA Insurance has a program to assist municipalities in their construction projects. There are many advantages for the owner of a project rather than the general contractor to control both the builder’s risk as well as the wrap-up liability policy. In the event of a loss, an owner-controlled insurance program (OCIP) with a single

insurer can mean broader coverage with lower premiums while removing the finger-pointing of sub-trades and multiple insurance companies. This workshop featured a construction insurance specialist to discuss this type of insurance.

## **ON THE ROCKS? – A LEGAL OVERVIEW OF GRAVEL PURCHASE AND MUNICIPAL REGULATION WITH JENEANE GRUNDBERG, BROWNLEE LLP**

Gravel is a non-renewable natural resource necessary for infrastructure development and maintenance. This workshop was hosted by Jeneane Grundberg and Jill Sheward from Brownlee LLP and focused on how municipalities can address the planning and development implications of gravel development permits. The workshop covered current regulatory frameworks and educated members on the pros and cons of each framework.

## **BALANCING DEVELOPMENT WITH CONSERVATION**

As rural municipalities cover approximately 85% of Alberta’s land mass, understanding the role that municipal governments play in managing the landscape, balancing development and conservation, and contributing to provincial, national, and international sustainable development goals is critical. This workshop introduced participants to the concept of natural asset management, how Sturgeon County balances economic development with agriculture, watershed management, mapping hydrological areas, and information on the ALUS Modeste Natural Infrastructure Pilot Project.

## **CONNECT CARE – AHS: BUILDING A HEALTHY FUTURE CARE SYSTEM IN ALBERTA**

Alberta Health Services (AHS) presented information on the new Connect Care system. Connect Care will allow for all medical records going forward to be stored electronically. This means that the medications and procedures a patient receives from AHS will be stored on a file that will be available to the medical professional treating them anywhere in Alberta. To demonstrate the importance of this system, two rural Albertans shared their story about how Connect Care can be used to keep multiple medical teams in both their hometowns and the big cities up to date on their medical history and condition.

## **GET TO KNOW YOUR ASSOCIATION**

This workshop allowed members to meet RMA staff and get to know the roles the different departments and Board of Directors play in the association. Representatives from the Board of Directors, External Relations & Advocacy, and Business Services — including Trade, Insurance, and Fuel — participated in the workshop. Members were able to ask the representatives from each area questions and learn more about how RMA functions and supports the advocacy and business needs of members.





## RESOLUTIONS

The business portion of the RMA convention includes the resolutions session, which allows members to vote on resolutions brought forward by member municipalities. Endorsed resolutions become the marching orders of the RMA for three years. Active and past resolutions can be found on the RMA resolutions database at [RMAAlberta.com](http://RMAAlberta.com).

The following resolutions were endorsed at the RMA Fall 2019 Convention.

- 1-19F Priority of Unpaid Property Taxes on Linear Property (*MD of Opportunity*)
- 2-19F Government of Alberta's Police Costing Test Model (*Rocky View County*)
- 3-19F Development of a Rural and Remote Lens for Government Services (*Yellowhead County*)
- 4-19F Alberta Environment and Parks Water and Wastewater Facility and Landfill Approvals (*Foothills County*)
- 5-19F Landowners' Rights (*County of Warner*)
- 6-19F Municipal Recourse for Solvent Companies Choosing Not to Pay Taxes (*Starland County*)
- 7-19F Utility Distribution Rates in Rural Communities and Public Facilities (*MD of Greenview*)
- 8-19F Opportunity for Improvement in FCM Representation of Rural Issues and Western Perspectives (*Wheatland County*)
- 9-19F Setback Referrals for Development Near Sour Gas Facilities in Crown Land Areas (*MD of Greenview*)
- 10-19F Community Peace Officer Access to RCMP Radio Channels (*Foothills County*)
- 11-19F Requirement for Municipal Authority Input on Energy Resource Development Projects (*MD of Bonnyville*)
- 12-19F Libraries Act Review and Rural Library Services (*Athabasca County and County of Wetaskiwin*)
- 13-19F Provincial Extended Responsibility Regulations (*Wheatland County*)
- 14-19F Provincial Funding for Regional Air Ambulance (*Cypress County*)
- 15-19F Provincial Highway Access and Setback Authority (*Sturgeon County*)
- 16-19F GST for Grants and Subsidies Interpretation (*Mountain View County and Northern Sunrise County*)
- 17-19F Airports Capital Assistance Program Funding for Regional Airports in Canada (*County of Grande Prairie*)
- 19-19F Water Security in Southern Alberta (*MD of Taber*)
- 20-19F Policies for Supporting Community Hospice Associations (*County of Stettler*)
- 21-19F Cellular 911 Call Answer Fees Increase (*Wheatland County*)
- 23-19F Mandatory Agriculture Education in the Classroom (*Lac La Biche County*)
- ER1-19F Dissolution of Mandatory Growth Management Boards (*Rocky View County*)

# CONVENTION SPONSORS

## PLATINUM

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## GOLD

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## SILVER

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## BRONZE

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Alberta Recycling  
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