

March 26, 2020

RMA Federal Minister Meeting Update

RMA board members had the opportunity to discuss important issues for rural Alberta

On March 16, RMA had the opportunity to have a conference call with the Honourable Maryam Monsef, Federal Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development. Minister meetings are crucial for building relationships with the federal government and discussing issues of importance for rural Alberta.

In 2019, the Federal Government released the [Rural Opportunity, National Prosperity: An Economic Development Strategy for Rural Canada](#), which was designed to address the priorities of rural Canada. The priorities in the report reference many of the same challenges and recommendations that are outlined in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' [Rural Challenges, National Opportunity](#) report published in 2017.

The key issues that RMA board discussed with the Federal Minister were:

- **Broadband Funding**
 - The importance of making funding from the upcoming Universal Broadband Fund accessible to rural and isolated communities, and reducing administrative barriers that may delay funding
 - Having cell phone connectivity linked to the provision of broadband, which is important for health and safety services
 - The importance of affordable and accessible internet service for rural residents and businesses that is comparable in quality and price to that in urban areas
- **Oil and Gas Industry Challenges**
 - The RMA board expressed the importance for the federal government to work with Alberta to create a streamlined and complementary regulatory environment that will help attract investment while still upholding stringent environmental and safety standards.

Minister Monsef reached out for RMA input on how the federal government could develop a meaningful rural lens, an issue that may provide an opportunity for follow-up. RMA is looking forward to working with the minister and will update members on updates.

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