



RMA Advocacy Report Card

Spring 2020



RMA Advocacy Report Card: Spring 2020

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Introduction

The Advocacy Report Card is divided into two sections.

- **Section 1** provides detailed information on the government response to the fall 2019 resolutions and includes the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) Board of Directors' reaction to the response as well as anticipated follow up.
- **Section 2** updates members by reporting on all active resolutions, grouped by advocacy area.

Please note that any reference to the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties or AAMDC in the Advocacy Report Card is equivalent to the Rural Municipalities of Alberta or RMA.

Definition of Terms

Following endorsement by RMA members, resolutions are sent to the appropriate level of government for response. Once a response is received, RMA labels the resolution with one of five indicators which determines the status of that resolution. The intention of providing a status for each resolution is to evaluate whether the government response meets the intent of the resolution. The status is not intended to reflect RMA's advocacy efforts on a resolution.

Below are the descriptions of all resolution ranking statuses.

STATUS	DESCRIPTION
Accepted	Meets RMA criteria as outlined in a) the resolution and b) as per the expectations of the Board of Directors.
Accepted in Principle	The development addresses that action is being taken to meet the intent of the resolution, but further action is required.
Accepted in Part	Some resolutions include multiple 'asks' in the operative clause. This status indicates that one of the 'asks' has been met while others require further action.
Intent Not Met	The intent of the resolution has not been met as outlined in the resolution or the current developments do not meet the approval of the Board of Directors.
Incomplete Information	RMA has not received enough information to assign a status. Further follow-up is required for RMA to make an informed decision on how to proceed.

Section 1: Government Responses to Fall 2019 Resolutions

RMA recently received responses to the resolutions adopted at the fall 2019 convention from the Government of Alberta and Government of Canada. The following table provides an overview of the initial assessment to resolutions following the response. **RMA emphasizes that this table only reflects the initial response received from the Government of Alberta and Government of Canada and that advocacy efforts on all resolutions are in progress.**

Reactions at a Glance

#	RESOLUTION NAME	STATUS
1-19F	Priority of Unpaid Property Taxes on Linear Property	Intent Not Met
2-19F	Government of Alberta's Police Costing Test Model	Intent Not Met
3-19F	Development of a Rural and Remote Lens for Government Services	Intent Not Met
4-19F	Alberta Environment and Parks Water and Wastewater Facility and Landfill Approvals	Intent Not Met
5-19F	Landowners' Rights	Intent Not Met
6-19F	Municipal Recourse for Solvent Companies Choosing Not to Pay Taxes	Intent Not Met
7-19F	Utility Distribution Rates in Rural Communities and Public Facilities	Intent Not Met
8-19F	Opportunity for Improvement in FCM Representation of Rural Issues and Western Perspectives	Incomplete Information
9-19F	Setback Referrals for Development Near Sour Gas Facilities in Crown Land Areas	Intent Not Met
10-19F	Community Peace Officer Access to RCMP Radio Channels	Accepted in Principle
11-19F	Requirement for Municipal Authority Input on Energy Resource Development Projects	Intent Not Met
12-19F	Libraries Act Review and Rural Library Services	Intent Not Met
13-19F	Provincial Extended Producer Responsibility Regulations	Accepted
14-19F	Provincial Funding for Regional Air Ambulance	Accepted in Part
15-19F	Provincial Highway Access and Setback Authority	Intent Not Met

16-19F	GST for Grants and Subsidies Interpretation	Accepted in Part
17-19F	Airports Capital Assistance Program Funding for Regional Airports in Canada	Incomplete Information
19-19F	Water Security in Southern Alberta	Intent Not Met
20-19F	Policies for Supporting Community Hospice Associations	Accepted in Principle
21-19F	Cellular 911 Call Answer Fees Increase	Intent Not Met
23-19F	Mandatory Agriculture Education in the Classroom	Intent Not Met
ER1-19F	Dissolution of Mandatory Growth Management Boards	Intent Not Met

Resolution 1-19F

Priority of Unpaid Property Taxes on Linear Property

MD of Opportunity

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy, Alberta Energy Regulator, Alberta Municipal Affairs**

WHEREAS municipalities in Alberta are dependent on property tax revenues to provide essential municipal services; and

WHEREAS the Alberta Court of Appeal decision in *Northern Sunrise County v. Virginia Hills Oil Corp.* (2019 ABCA 61) (the “Virginia Hills Decision”) determined that property taxes on linear property constitute an unsecured claim against the assets of the taxpayer; and

WHEREAS the Virginia Hills Decision has and will dramatically affect the ability of municipalities in Alberta to recover property taxes and property taxes on linear property in particular; and

WHEREAS municipalities in Alberta have been unable to recover many millions of dollars in outstanding property taxes;

WHEREAS the ability of municipalities to recover tax arrears in respect to oil and gas properties is compromised because of significant unfunded abandonment and reclamation costs that are a first-ranking charge in favour of the Alberta Energy Regulator; and

WHEREAS amendments to the *Municipal Government Act* are necessary to avoid further significant negative impacts on Alberta municipalities as a result of the Virginia Hills Decision;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate for the Government of Alberta to take steps to ensure that municipalities are able to effectively recover all property taxes, including property taxes on linear property;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate for the Government of Alberta to address the growing concern regarding unfunded abandonment and reclamation costs for oil and gas properties and the affect that those costs have on the ability of municipalities to recover unpaid property taxes;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate for the Government of Alberta to make immediate amendments to the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) to

- 1. Clarify that the reference to “property tax” in section 348 includes all property taxes, including property taxes on linear property;**
- 2. Clarify the meaning of the phrase “...land and any improvements to the land...” in section 348 to specify that all of the property that is subject to assessment pursuant to Part 9 of the MGA within that municipality is subject to the special lien established in that section;**
- 3. Provide municipalities with improved enforcement powers, such as the specific power to apply to the courts for the appointment of a receiver to enforce a claim for unpaid linear property taxes against the assets that are subject to a special lien established by section 348;**
- 4. Apply the above amendments retroactively to ensure that existing linear property tax arrears constitute a secured claim.**

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

The Government of Alberta recognizes the ongoing concern from municipalities regarding unpaid property taxes on oil and gas properties. With the downturn in the energy industry in recent years, municipalities are finding it increasingly difficult to collect municipal and education property taxes, often due to insolvency or receivership of oil and gas properties.

The provincial government has taken measures to help alleviate the financial burden on predominantly rural municipalities, including establishing the Provincial Education Requisition Credit program for uncollectable taxes on oil and gas properties. The Provincial Education Requisition Credit is extended until the end of the 2021 taxation year.

Alberta Municipal Affairs is working with Alberta Energy, the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, and other partners to review legislative options relating to special liens, as well as other potential options. Recommendations are expected to be brought forward for consideration for potential spring 2020 amendments.

Alberta Energy

- Alberta Energy is aware that the number of inactive oil and gas wells is growing across Alberta.
- The Government of Alberta wants to ensure that the economic environment exists for private industry to be successful and able to bear the costs of well abandonment. The Government of Alberta wants industry to be in a position to build on the province's strong record of responsible environmental reclamation.
- Alberta Energy is working with the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) and industry to review the liability management framework in Alberta, to ensure producers address liabilities without discouraging new investment.
- Industry will remain financially responsible for bringing land back towards its original condition, protecting Alberta taxpayers.
- Alberta Energy is working with industry to prioritize the key remaining recommendations in the Roadmap to Recovery report, and is seeking feedback on Alberta's vision for natural gas.
- This work will help create an economic environment for industry to be successful and meet their environmental and financial obligation.

Alberta Energy Regulator

- The AER works to protect Albertans and the environment by ensuring that an insolvent oil or gas operator's assets are transferred into the hands of responsible operators or, where no responsible party can be found, to the industry-funded Orphan Well Association (OWA).
- Limited funds exist in insolvencies. Following the Supreme Court of Canada's Redwater decision, the AER upholds its existing regulatory requirements to ensure that any remaining

funds in an operator's estate are used to address end-of-life obligations (i.e. abandonment and reclamation) before creditors receive financial recovery.

- The AER upholds these requirements regardless of who applies (i.e. creditor or municipality) to the court to appoint a receiver.
- During insolvencies, court-appointed receivers and trustees are responsible for coordinating a claims process where creditors, including municipalities, can apply to recover funds that are owed to them by insolvent companies.
- Ultimately, receivers and the courts determine the validity and priority of claims and determine which claims are paid and by how much. The AER is not responsible for the claims process, outside of upholding its requirements to ensure end of life obligations are addressed first.
- The Government of Alberta is currently reviewing the liability management framework to ensure that liability remains with industry and not the Alberta taxpayer. The AER is working with the government - which is responsible for setting policy - to broaden our processes to allow for a more holistic assessment of a company's ability to address its end-of-life obligations.
 - The AER has also provided the Government of Alberta with information on gaps and opportunities within the liability management framework, including analytical data to support their assessment of options for liability policy changes.
 - The AER is prepared to implement any policy changes that the Government of Alberta makes to manage liability in the province.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response acknowledges the challenges being faced by rural municipalities related to unpaid property taxes on oil and gas properties and indicates that multiple Government of Alberta ministries are working to develop solutions to the issue, including special liens and other options. As of the writing of this reaction (April 2020), no detailed discussions on solutions have taken place between RMA and either Alberta Municipal Affairs or Alberta Energy on this issue.

RMA understands that Alberta Energy's response indicates the importance of designing an abandoned well remediation approach that supports industry competitiveness. However, this approach must also consider industry accountability and the impacts that municipalities are facing due to the lack of municipal input into the current liability management system. A January 2020 RMA member survey indicated that rural municipalities face an estimated \$173 million in unpaid taxes from the oil and gas industry, which illustrates the seriousness of this issue and the need for both short-term fiscal support for municipalities and long-term legislative and policy change to prevent the continuation of this issue.

Additionally, the Government of Alberta response does not specifically commit to updating the *Municipal Government Act* as requested in the resolution. RMA is hopeful that the proposed amendments will be considered as part of a solution to this issue.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and will be re-evaluated based on engagement with Alberta Municipal Affairs and Alberta Energy in collaborating with RMA on this issue.

Resolution 2-19F

Government of Alberta's Police Costing Test Model

Rocky View County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Justice and Solicitor General**

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta committed to reviewing the current police costing model as part of their election platform in advance of the 2019 election; and

WHEREAS there have been recent increases in rural crime in Alberta and the Government of Alberta has acknowledged this as a priority; and

WHEREAS in September 2019, the Government of Alberta began consultations on a test police costing model with the 291 municipalities who currently receive frontline policing from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) through the Provincial Police Services Agreement; and

WHEREAS the purpose of the model is to develop a process through which the province recovers a share of frontline policing costs from municipalities; and

WHEREAS the proposed formula would allow the province to recover between 15% (\$34.9 million) and 70% (\$162.8 million) of policing costs by requiring each municipality to contribute using a formula based on 70% equalized assessment and 30% population; and

WHEREAS equalized assessment is not a stable measure and does not translate directly to tax revenue or a municipality's wealth, especially due to the struggles that many municipalities face in collecting non-residential taxes; and

WHEREAS the proposed model will download policing costs onto municipalities with no apparent improvement to service levels or local input into policing; and

WHEREAS the model does not consider the contributions that municipalities already make to policing, including community peace officers, enhanced policing positions, and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS implementing the test model will affect the quality of policing as municipalities may be forced to re-allocate funding from supplementary services to support front-line policing; and

WHEREAS the increased costs of the test model, combined with other challenges currently facing municipalities, could have serious implications across the province and potentially threaten the viability of some municipalities;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to engage in further consultation with municipalities on the police costing test model to examine options to meet the Government of Alberta's goal of reducing policing costs without negatively impacting policing service delivery or municipal financial viability.

Government Response

Justice and Solicitor General

The Government of Alberta's new police funding model will constitute a total increase in rural police funding of more than \$286 million over five years with every dollar of the additional funds invested in front-line policing. Under the cost-sharing terms in the Provincial Police Service Agreement (PPSA), Alberta pays 70 per cent of policing costs and the federal government covers the remaining 30 per cent. With the additional investment from municipalities, the federal share of the PPSA will increase as well. Revenue collected through the new model will be invested in policing, leading to a substantial increase in Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers and civilian positions throughout the province. This investment places priority on adding uniformed patrol officers in rural RCMP detachments and will also add members to specialized RCMP units that dismantle organized crime, drug trafficking, investigate auto and scrap metal theft. New civilian positions will assist with administrative tasks and investigative support to improve response times and help ensure officers have the support network they need to protect Albertans by spending more time on roads and in communities.

Stakeholders such as the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) have been asking the Alberta government for many years to address police funding. Under the *Police Act*, the province provided policing to some municipalities at no direct cost to those municipalities. These municipalities primarily included towns of 5,000 population or less, Metis settlements, as well as all municipal districts and counties regardless of their population. Alberta contracts the RCMP as its provincial police service.

The engagement process:

- We proposed a new police-funding model for a variety of reasons. The current funding model is not sustainable. Stakeholders have been asking the Alberta government for many years to address inequities in the funding model. Increased crime across rural Alberta is placing added pressure on the police and justice system. At the same time, nearly 20 per cent of Albertans have not directly paid for the front-line policing costs in their community. The new police-funding model will not only address this inequity, but it will also help direct needed resources to policing and justice priorities in rural Alberta.
- Engagement on the police-funding model with stakeholders, including leaders in rural municipalities, took place between September and October of 2019. The perspectives gathered during the engagement, received via correspondence addressed to the ministry, and heard during Minister Schweitzer's tour of rural municipalities this fall were included in the discussions.
- Under the test model, small and rural communities (i.e., those receiving RCMP provincial policing) that had not previously paid for front-line policing would begin contributing a portion of the costs. We considered stakeholder views when finalizing the model. On November 7, 2019, Minister Schweitzer held a webinar for municipal representatives to discuss feedback gathered on the funding model. To summarize:
 - Municipalities want equalized assessment to have a lower weight than in the test model (where it is at 70 per cent);
 - Municipalities want the funding model to factor in detachment distance and currently funded positions (e.g. enhanced policing positions);

- Municipalities are currently completing budgets for 2020 and forecasting for future years; there is a strong desire to have phased-in implementation of changes and for the percentage of costs to be below the 15 per cent threshold presented in the test model;
- Revenue gathered from the funding model should be reinvested in the communities that are paying for front-line policing; and
- It is critical for municipalities to have greater input into identifying policing priorities.

The new police-funding model:

- Small and rural communities, with some exceptions, will begin contributing a portion of their front-line policing costs in 2020. This new cost-sharing partnership will bring small and rural municipalities into line with larger communities and cities. To give communities time to adjust, the new funding model is being phased in: communities will contribute 10 per cent of policing costs in 2020, followed by 15 per cent in 2021, 20 per cent in 2022, and 30 per cent in 2023. Communities will also no longer be billed for the full-time enhanced policing positions that they have previously funded, as the government will be absorbing this cost.
- The establishment of a new Alberta Police Advisory Board will give small and rural communities policed by the RCMP a forum to discuss policing priorities with the RCMP. It will be made up of representatives from the RMA, the AUMA, and the Alberta Association of Police Governance.
- The new funding model will be implemented on April 1, 2020. Municipalities can expect to receive an annual invoice for their front-line policing costs beginning in January 2021. The new funding model is sustainable and equitable while supporting public safety measures that will help protect all Albertans, no matter where they live. Policing is a "people - based" service, and we are committed to working in partnership with Albertans to create solutions that work for them.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates that adequate consultation occurred with municipal stakeholders during the development of the police costing model in late 2019. While consultation did take place, RMA does not consider the original test model, or the final model, as adequate to improve police service in rural and small urban communities in the province. RMA has the following concerns with the model that should be addressed through further consultation with municipal stakeholders:

- The Government of Alberta response indicates that the new cost model "will bring small and rural municipalities into line with larger communities and cities." However, the cost model does not provide rural and small urban municipalities with any enhanced local input into policing to align with their new financial responsibilities. While large cities can form police commissions to provide mandated direction to local police services, rural and small urban communities continue to be limited to forming voluntary police committees, which are much more limited in both scope and power. RMA's formal submission into the police costing model development requested "no costs should be recovered from municipalities without corresponding enhancements to service delivery and local input into policing." While the

Alberta Police Advisory Board will allow RMA (and AUMA) to provide input into high-level policing priorities in the province, it will in no way allow individual municipalities to provide enhanced **local input** into policing that reflects their new financial responsibilities.

- Throughout the consultation process, the Government of Alberta did not provide municipal stakeholders with any information on how the new costing model would be linked to improved local police services. There was no plan, outline or principles to provide stakeholders peace of mind that the cost model was anything other than a download. Following the completion of the consultation, the Government of Alberta announced that the cost model would be used to support 300 new RCMP officers and 200 new civilian administrative staff for the province, but provided no information on how these resources would be deployed or whether municipalities would have any input as to how they would be used to address local rural crime challenges.
- RMA emphasized the importance of linking the police costing model to service levels by including a subsidy or modifier based on the proximity of a municipality to a detachment. While the costing model includes a detachment subsidy (municipalities without a detachment receive a 5% reduction on their invoice) rural municipalities are inexplicably excluded from this subsidy, although at least nine rural municipalities should qualify. While urban municipalities located as close as four kilometres to a detachment in a neighbouring municipality receive the subsidy, there are cases of hamlets in rural municipalities being located approximately 75 kilometres from a detachment that are ineligible for the subsidy.
- The Government of Alberta response correctly indicates that rural municipalities expressed concern with the use of equalized assessment in the costing model formula. However, the reduction of the weighting of equalized assessment from 70% in the test model to 50% in the final model does not address RMA's primary concern with the metric, which is that it in no way aligns with required service levels, which should be driven by a combination of population and crime statistics. RMA's formal submission into the police costing model development expressed the following concerns with the use of equalized assessment:
 - Equalized assessment is not an accurate measure of municipal "wealth" or ability to pay
 - In rural municipalities, equalized assessment represents "high-risk" revenue from the oil and gas industry, which is reflected in current issues with uncollected municipal taxes on oil and gas property
 - Relying on equalized assessment to measure ability to pay may result in a greater tax burden on oil and gas companies operating in rural municipalities
 - Other provincial programs use equalized assessment as a measure of need, rather than wealth, which call into questions its usefulness as a measure of a municipality's ability to pay

The examples above are intended to demonstrate that although consultation did take place in relation to the development of a police costing model, the test model, the consultation process, and the final model did not adequately consider rural municipal concerns relating to service levels or local input. The current model has the potential to impact both local police service and municipal viability and does

require further consultation. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to request further amendments to the model moving forward.

Resolution 3-19F

Development of a Rural and Remote Lens for Government Services

Yellowhead County

Carried

- ▶ ***Advocacy Target: Executive Council, Alberta Municipal Affairs, Alberta Community and Social Services, Alberta Health, Alberta Children's Services, Alberta Communications and Public Engagement***

WHEREAS provincial government services and investments focus primarily on urban centres due to population; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta does not officially consider the unique challenges and needs of rural communities when determining access to provincial services; and

WHEREAS rural and remote communities have been relegated to a second tier of service provision due to distance to services, remoteness of individuals, low population and low density; and

WHEREAS funding in the form of grants, and collaborative services and initiatives is not available to many rural and remote communities due to a pre-existing lack of services;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to develop a rural and remote lens to better understand the context of, and mitigate the unique challenges of, geographic remoteness, low population, and service accessibility/density faced by human service programs in Alberta's rural and remote communities.

Government Response

Municipal Affairs

The Government of Alberta recognizes the importance of understanding and responding to the unique circumstances and concerns of rural and remote communities, and is committed to continuing to work with Rural Municipalities of Alberta and others to ensure government decisions do not reflect a "one size fits all" approach.

While some other jurisdictions, such as Newfoundland and Labrador, have adopted official "rural lens" policies, those policies in practice are not dissimilar to the existing robust policy development process already in place in Alberta. The policy development cycle that is part of the decision-making process in the Government of Alberta ensures the impacts on communities of all sizes, both rural and urban, are carefully considered.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates that although Alberta does not have a specific "rural lens" for evaluating policy decisions, community impact is a formal component of the provincial policy development cycle.

Based on the endorsement of the resolution, the current community impact measures used by the Government of Alberta are inadequate in addressing and mitigating the unique impacts that provincial policy decisions may have on rural and remote areas of the province.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and RMA will continue to advocate for the Government of Alberta to more deliberately consider the impacts of policy changes on rural and remote areas of the province.

Resolution 4-19F

Alberta Environment and Parks Water and Wastewater Facility and Landfill Approvals

Foothills County

Carried as amended

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Parks**

WHEREAS Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) sets the standards for municipal water and wastewater treatment facilities and landfills; and

WHEREAS municipalities are required to build and operate such facilities to current AEP standards either as new facilities or when upgrading existing facilities; and

WHEREAS AEP processes allow individuals who claim to be affected by the operation of new or upgraded facilities to file statements of concern and eventually to appeal to the Alberta Environmental Approval Board regarding those approvals; and

WHEREAS the cost of responding to such statements of concern or appeals and attending approval hearings can be onerous and in some cases beyond the financial means of the municipality; and

WHEREAS in many cases concerns regarding provincial standards are not based on science or are politically motivated;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta adjust their processes related to municipal water and wastewater facility and landfill approvals or renewals to require that in order for a statement of concern or appeal to be valid, 10% of the landowners/residents deemed to be affected must endorse the statement of concern or appeal.

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP)

- AEP acknowledges the importance of municipal infrastructure projects to Albertans, and appreciates that timely and cost-effective delivery remains an ongoing challenge for municipalities.
- While it is important to ensure any activity is properly pursued in a manner that minimizes negative environmental, social or economic impacts, it is also important to ensure that issues or concerns raised about a proposed activity are legitimate.
- AEP would welcome the opportunity to discuss statements of concern and environmental appeals in further detail with the RMA and its members.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA appreciates the Government of Alberta's acknowledgement of the importance of municipal infrastructure projects to Albertans and that timely and cost-effective delivery remains a challenge. However, the Government of Alberta's response does not state that municipal water and wastewater facility and landfill approval or renewal process will be adjusted to require endorsement from 10% of landowners/residents deemed to be affected for a statement of concern to be valid. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will update this resolution based on the outcomes of future meetings with AEP regarding RMA's concerns on environmental appeals.

Resolution 5-19F

Landowners' Rights

County of Warner

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, Alberta Environment and Parks**

WHEREAS the *Petty Trespass Act* and *Trespass to Premises Act* provide conditions for trespass on lands and premises; and

WHEREAS inconsistencies exist between how the two Acts address the rights of landowners; and

WHEREAS section 19.1 of the *Land Stewardship Act*, which extends the Government of Alberta's power to limit development of private land, is unclear in its treatment of compensation in cases where the Government of Alberta repeals private land rights and compensates the previous land owner due to a regional plan or amendment to a regional plan;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to develop a clear definition of landowners' rights;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that all relevant acts and regulations be amended to reflect the clarified definition of landowners' rights.

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Parks

- The *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* (ALSA) supports the government's need to plan and manage for growth, and to enhance environmental management while respecting property rights. The ALSA does not limit any existing landowner rights to compensation or existing appeal mechanisms. In 2011, Bill 10 amended the ALSA to include a clear statement that government must respect property and other rights of individuals. The ALSA also provides additional ways for Albertans to request a review, compensation or a variance in relation to a regional plan.
- The ALSA provides mechanisms for public input. Under the ALSA, consultation with Albertans is a legal requirement during the drafting of regional plans. Government must also present regional plans or amendments to the Legislature before Cabinet can approve them.
- The *Surface Rights Act* assures a reasonable right of entry for industry operators (obtained through the Surface Rights Board), but also provides landowners and public land occupants with certain protections against impacts to private property or ability to maintain public land leases.
- While definitions may not be centrally located, Alberta's various legislation and regulations already contain consideration of rights largely in respect of property and land.

Alberta Justice and Solicitor General

Property rights are being considered as part of a platform commitment to create legislation to address property rights. The Alberta government is committed to passing an *Alberta Property Rights Protection*

Act that will further entrench the right not to be deprived of enjoyment or use of property without due process of law.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta's response indicates that they amended the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* (ALSA) to include a clear statement that government must respect property and other rights of individuals. However, the government has stated that although the definition of landowners' rights may not be centrally located, Alberta's various legislation and regulations already contain consideration of rights largely in respect to property and land. This resolution is requesting the Government of Alberta to develop a clear definition of landowners' rights and that all regulations be amended to reflect the clarified definition. The RMA assigns this resolution as **Intent Not Met**, as based on the government's response, property rights are being considered as part of a platform commitment to create legislation to address property rights, however legislation has not been created yet.

Resolution 6-19F

Municipal Recourse for Solvent Companies Choosing Not to Pay Taxes

Starland County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy, Alberta Energy Regulator, Alberta Municipal Affairs**

WHEREAS municipalities rely on property tax revenue to provide essential services and core infrastructure to support economic development, including that of the energy industry; and

WHEREAS some solvent energy companies refuse to pay municipal taxes or have threatened to do so in order to extract concessions from municipalities; and

WHEREAS municipalities lack effective and pro-active tools needed to recover unpaid property taxes from oil and gas companies; and

WHEREAS the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) is responsible for ensuring that energy companies operate in a responsible manner with regards to their environmental, legal and financial responsibilities; and

WHEREAS the refusal of an energy company to pay its municipal taxes is not currently grounds for the AER to suspend or revoke an energy company's eligibility to hold well and pipeline licences;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate that the Government of Alberta direct the Alberta Energy Regulator to add unpaid municipal taxes to the grounds for which a company may be denied a licence to operate in Alberta.

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

The Government of Alberta recognizes the ongoing concern from municipalities regarding unpaid property taxes on oil and gas properties. With the downturn in the energy industry in recent years, municipalities are finding it increasingly difficult to collect municipal and education property taxes, often due to insolvency or receivership of oil and gas properties.

The provincial government has taken measures to help alleviate the financial burden on predominantly rural municipalities, including establishing the Provincial Education Requisition Credit program for uncollectable taxes on oil and gas properties. The Provincial Education Requisition Credit has now been extended until the end of the 2021 taxation year.

Alberta Municipal Affairs is working with Alberta Energy, the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, and other partners to review legislative options relating to special liens, as well as other potential options. Recommendations are expected to be brought forward for consideration for potential spring 2020 amendments.

Alberta Energy

- Alberta Energy is working with the AER and industry to review the liability management framework in Alberta, to ensure producers address liabilities without discouraging new investment.
- Alberta Energy is also working with industry to help prioritize the key recommendations remaining in the Roadmap to Recovery report, and is seeking feedback on Alberta's vision for natural gas.
- This work will help create an economic environment for industry to be successful and meet their environmental and financial obligations, including tax assessments.

Alberta Energy Regulator

- The AER does not have jurisdiction to impose licence conditions on oil and gas operators with unpaid municipal taxes.
 - Under AER's licensee eligibility requirements, which were introduced in December 2017, operators must disclose financial information to the AER, such as audited financial statements and the existence of insolvency proceedings.
 - Under these requirements, the AER can revoke or restrict an operator's existing licence eligibility based on their financials at the time of a material change (e.g. changes to corporate structure, directors, significant sales) or compliance history.
- The AER does not verify that municipal taxes have been paid by operators before approving license transfers. In addition, the AER is not mandated to collect and verify information that operators have paid their municipal taxes.
- The AER is participating in a working group with government bodies such as Alberta Municipal Affairs to share information on the health of oil and gas operators.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Alberta Municipal Affairs response indicates that the Ministry is working with RMA and Alberta Energy on possible solutions to address unpaid property taxes by the oil and gas industry. As of the writing of this reaction (February 2020), no detailed discussions on solutions have taken place between RMA and either Alberta Municipal Affairs or Alberta Energy on this issue. Additionally, the response does not reference the specific request in resolution 6-19F, which is to “add unpaid municipal taxes to the grounds for which a company may be denied a licence to operate in Alberta.”

Both the Alberta Energy and AER responses do not indicate an interest in revising liability management criteria specifically to address unpaid municipal taxes, although Alberta Energy does indicate that the liability management framework is being reviewed.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and will be re-evaluated based on the outcomes of collaboration among Alberta Municipal Affairs, Alberta Energy, and the AER, as well as Alberta Energy's work with industry to review the liability management framework.

Resolution 7-19F

Utility Distribution Rates in Rural Communities and Public Facilities

MD of Greenview

Carried as amended

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy, Alberta Utilities Commission**

WHEREAS the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) regulates Alberta's investor-owned utilities (electric, gas, water) and certain municipally-owned electric utilities to ensure that customers receive safe and reliable service at just and reasonable rates; and

WHEREAS the AUC also regulates the routes, tolls and tariffs of energy transmission through utility pipelines and electric transmission and distribution lines; and

WHEREAS companies who propose to construct or rebuild electric generation, transmission or distribution facilities in Alberta must apply to the AUC for siting approval; and

WHEREAS when reviewing the utility's application, the AUC considers the social and environmental impacts, as well as any economic implications for the ratepayers; and

WHEREAS distribution charges cover the cost of delivering electricity from transmission system to its destination; and

WHEREAS due to lower population density and greater distance between consumers, distribution charges are significantly higher in rural and northern areas; and

WHEREAS distribution charges for the average home in Alberta range from 24-52% of the customer's bill, but in rural and northern areas distribution charges can exceed that 52%, which leads to significantly higher utility bills overall; and

WHEREAS transmission charges for the average home in Alberta range from 13-23% of the customer's bill, but in rural and northern areas these transmission charges can exceed 23%, again leading to higher utility bills; and

WHEREAS public facilities are charged based on commercial rates based on peak demand consumption, which significantly increases the cost to operate such facilities;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) requests the Government of Alberta review regulatory requirements relating to transmission and distribution rates of utility companies;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA requests the Government of Alberta review the requirement that public facilities are charged commercial rates and bills based on peak demand.

Government Response

Alberta Energy

- The Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) is responsible for setting just and reasonable distribution and transmission tariffs.

- The department refers this resolution to the AUC for further explanation.

Additional Background

- Alberta Energy is aware of customers' concerns over transmission and distribution system costs, especially in rural Alberta.
- The Government of Alberta's Transmission Regulation has determined that the percentage of consumer load is responsible for transmission system costs. The Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) determines the tariff design to cover system costs, which is approved by the AUC.
- On an annual basis, the AESO submits the General Tariff Application for approval. If organizations such as the Rural Municipalities of Alberta are concerned about the transmission tariff the rural and northern areas are paying, they are encouraged to intervene during AESO's General Tariff Application hearing to the AUC. Consumer groups representing various types of consumers regularly intervene in this annual hearing to present their views.
- Alberta Energy will be reviewing transmission policy associated with the Transmission Regulation expiration in 2021, although tariff design is outside of the scope of that review.
- Distribution costs are incurred in the delivery of electricity and natural gas directly to a customer's home. These costs include connecting and disconnecting customers, building new services, operating, and maintaining the distribution infrastructure, replacing distribution infrastructure that is at the end of its service life, sending distribution charges to the retailer, providing meter reading services and implementing technology to maintain safe and reliable service.
- Distribution costs are recovered through distribution charges on a customer's utility bill that is provided to the customer by their retailer. Distribution charges for investor-owned and certain municipally owned distribution companies are regulated by the AUC.
- Since 2013, the AUC has used performance-based regulation to regulate distribution costs in Alberta. The central goal of performance-based regulation is to mimic competitive forces and better promote efficiency within utilities, ultimately lowering distribution costs for customers. The AUC is currently in its second generation of performance-based regulation, with each generation lasting five years. The AUC believes that this form of regulation has helped keep costs lower than they otherwise would have been.
- The Rural Municipalities of Alberta stated in its fall 2019 resolutions that it has been invited to participate in the AUC-led Distribution Inquiry.

Alberta Utilities Commission

Commercial Rates for Public Facilities

- Public facilities such as community halls are billed at the commercial rate, which is higher than that of the residential rate. Additionally, the rates are based on peak demand, where the accounts are billed for the highest rate of electricity usage for a period of time. These factors increase the costs of electricity for public facilities.

- The RMA noted that public facilities are classified as commercial operations in distribution company rate classes and experience commercial rates for the consumption of electricity. As part of this commercial treatment billing rates are based on peak demand generally measured over a one-year period.

AUC background

- Depending on consumption patterns some commercial electric service rates could result in a lower bill than a residential consumer using the same amount of power. Put another way, public facilities being billed with a commercial rate may result in bills higher than that of the residential rate, depending on the pattern in which energy is consumed.
- Rate treatment by AUC-regulated distribution providers such as Fortis Alberta and ATCO Electric is based on rate classes. Rate classes are determined by assessing consumption patterns and magnitude and grouping similar users together. Facilities or uses that have comparable consumption levels and patterns, and comparable load levels (capacity demanded) are grouped together.
- The overarching goal in rate class determination is to ensure that each group or class of electricity consumer pays the reasonable costs that that class creates. This is linked to the central principle of utility rate determination, that utility users pay the reasonable cost of the service being provided to them. This approach and structure also ensures that one rate class does not subsidize another and that each class fairly pays the costs attributable to its members.
- The regulatory principle here is designing rates based on cost causation. Deviating from this approach requires consumers outside the favoured rate class to pay and subsidize the additional costs that are not properly assigned to the favoured rate class.
- In practice, the long-established and refined cost-causation approach results in classes such as residential, small general service, large general service/industrial, oilfield, farm service, lighting service, irrigation, etc. Many classes are based on peak demand, as peak demand determines the capacity of service (in layman's terms, the thickness of the wire and capacity or caliber of related equipment) that must be provided and maintained to ensure reliability. If a particular customer required the system to be constructed to handle its peak demand, but the rate structure was designed to ignore the peak demand for that customer, other customers in the utility's service territory would be required pay for the additional costs associated with building the system to handle the peak.
- At this time the AUC does not contemplate, nor would current provincial legislative structure permit, a socialized system where customers would ultimately bear the costs of cross-subsidization that would level rates among the different service providers across the province. Similarly, the AUC does not contemplate the creation of unique rate classes on bases other than how the customers in the rate classes use energy and, accordingly, cause costs for the system.
- Determining the rates for each regulated electricity distribution provider in Alberta is a two-step process:

- In the first step, or Phase 1, all of the utility's reasonable costs are determined. This is carried out through an in-depth, evidence-based public AUC process. Representatives of various consumer classes can and do take part. At the end of Phase 1, the AUC issues a decision with reasons outlining what the utility's reasonable costs are.
- In the second step, or Phase 2, the costs are attributed to various rate classes. This too is done through an in-depth, evidence-based public AUC proceeding process. Representatives of various consumer classes can and do take part. This process determines rate classes and the terms and conditions of those classes.
- Any affected party can seek to take part in either phase of a distribution utility's rate-setting in the AUC's evidence-based, public proceedings.
- The RMA notes it was contacted about participating in the AUC's Distribution System Inquiry. Those conversations and interactions with the AUC also included encouragement for the RMA and/or its members to participate in various Phase 2 proceedings of distribution providers in which rate classes and their terms and conditions are determined.
- The AUC continues to encourage the RMA and/or its members to take part in electric distribution utility Phase 2 proceedings in which rate classes are determined.
- In this regard, FortisAlberta has recently filed a Phase 2 tariff application. This is being assessed by the AUC under proceeding 25201. The AUC is also assessing ATCO Electric's Phase 2 application received in July 2019, although that process (AUC proceeding 24747) is far more advanced. Intervening parties in that proceeding include the Utilities Consumer Advocate, the Consumers' Coalition of Alberta, the Industrial Power Consumers of Alberta, and the Alberta Federation of REAs.
- The AUC encourages the RMA or its members to take part in the Fortis Phase 2 proceedings.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The RMA appreciates that Alberta Energy and the Alberta Utility Commission (AUC) is aware of customer concerns over transmission and distribution system costs, especially in rural Alberta. The resolution is requesting that the Government of Alberta review the regulatory requirements relating to transmission and distribution rates of utility companies. The Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) determines the tariff design to cover system costs, which is approved by the AUC. Though there is no mention in this resolution that the government will review the regulatory requirements, the RMA plans to accept Alberta Energy's invitation to participate in the AESO General Tariff Application Hearing in 2021 to voice member concerns.

The second part of this resolution is requesting the Government of Alberta to review the requirement that public facilities are charged commercial rates and bills based on peak demand. The AUC does not contemplate the creation of unique rate classes on bases other than how the customers in the rate classes use energy and, accordingly, cause costs for the system.

RMA assigns this resolution as **Intent Not Met** but intends to participate in the AESO General Tariff Application hearing to ensure that rural concerns are being addressed.

Resolution 8-19F

Opportunity for Improvement in FCM Representation of Rural Issues and Western Perspectives

Wheatland County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Federation of Canadian Municipalities**

WHEREAS all rural municipalities in Alberta are members of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) which is a collective of nearly 2000 member municipalities of all sizes across Canada; and

WHEREAS FCM's purpose is to advocate for municipalities to be sure their citizens' needs are reflected in federal policies and programs; and

WHEREAS FCM has identified rural, northern, and remote communities as one of 15 focus areas for its advocacy efforts; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities in Alberta recognize that rural municipalities and their priorities were not always included as a focus of FCM, and appreciate efforts made by FCM to incorporate rural municipalities and their priorities into its platforms; and

WHEREAS attendance at the 2019 FCM conference resulted in disappointment for rural municipal leaders because the issues impacting them and western Canadian perspectives on major points of discussion were not accurately represented at the conference; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities in Alberta believe that there is opportunity for improvement in FCM's representation of rural and western Canadian issues and perspectives;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) use their collective strength and understanding of the rural municipal perspective and priority issues to promote accurate inclusion of rural and western Canadian issues and perspectives at the annual Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) conference, and in FCM communications and advocacy efforts;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA send a letter to FCM identifying areas of alignment and concern with the content of the 2019 annual FCM conference and requesting that planning committees for future annual conferences include appropriate representation from rural western Canada to ensure that conferences are relevant and meaningful to all member municipalities.

Government Response

No formal response has been received to date.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA is represented on FCM's Standing Committee on Conference Planning by President Al Kemmere, RM of Wood Buffalo Councillor Krista Balsom, Parkland County Councillor AnnLisa Jensen, Sturgeon County Councillor Wayne Bokenfohr, and Cypress County Councillor Robin Kurpjewit. Combined, these RMA and rural municipal representatives provide input into the structure and content of annual FCM conventions. However, the committee also includes participation from 35 other municipal

representatives from across Canada, each with their own priorities for conference content. Due to the cancellation of the 2020 FCM Conference, it is currently unknown the extent to which rural programming will be improved over the 2019 conference. RMA will continue to advocate for adequate rural programming, both through the FCM Standing Committee on Conference Planning and other means, and re-evaluate this resolution based on the 2021 FCM Conference. This resolution is currently assigned a status of **Incomplete Information**.

Resolution 9-19F

Setback Referrals for Development Near Sour Gas Facilities in Crown Land Areas

MD of Greenview

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy, Alberta Energy Regulator**

WHEREAS section 684(1) of the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) states that the development authority must make a decision on the application for a development permit within 40 days after the receipt by the applicant of an acknowledgement of their application being deemed complete; and

WHEREAS section 6 of the *Subdivision and Development Regulation* AR 43/2002 (the Regulation) requires a subdivision authority to make a decision on an application for subdivision within 21 days of the date of the application being deemed complete if no referrals were made and within 60 days from the date of an application under section 4(1) of the Regulation being deemed complete in accordance with section 653.1 of the MGA; and

WHEREAS section 10(1) of the Regulation requires that the subdivision or development authority provide a copy of the application for a development that results in a permanent dwelling, public facility or unrestricted country residential development, as defined by the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER), to the AER if any of the land pertaining to the application is located within 1.5 kilometres of a sour gas facility, or a lesser distance agreed to, in writing, by the AER and the subdivision or development authority; and

WHEREAS the AER states that they will provide a response to setback referrals within 30 days of receiving a referral from a subdivision or development authority; and

WHEREAS the AER's 30-day timeline acts as an approximate deadline and is often not met; and

WHEREAS late responses from the AER prevent municipalities from meeting their legislated timelines without requesting extensions from applicants, thereby obstructing an orderly development process;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta review the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) timelines for responding to setback referrals for development near sour gas facilities, particularly in Crown land areas, to ensure they consistently respond to applicants within their own 30-day response commitment.

Government Response

Alberta Energy

- The department refers this resolution to the AER for further explanation.

Background

- The Rural Municipalities of Alberta reports that late responses from the AER have prevented municipalities from meeting their legislated timelines without requesting extensions from applicants.

Alberta Energy Regulator

- The AER's setback requirements ensure public safety, by establishing a minimum distance between and residential and commercial developments that are in close proximity to sour gas facilities and pipelines.
 - These requirements are outlined in Directive 056: Energy Development Applications and Schedules.
- Under Section 10 of the *Municipal Government Act* (Subdivision and Development Regulation), local and subdivision authorities (e.g. municipalities, counties, municipal districts) must submit copies of two documents to the AER - a subdivision application and a development application - if a permanent residential or commercial development is within 1.5 kilometers of a sour gas facility.
 - The AER reviews this information and provides setback distances back to these parties; this process is referred to as a setback referral.
- In November 2013, the AER issued Bulletin 2013-03 to clarify our setback requirements from oil and gas facilities. The bulletin also summarizes our process for responding to setback referrals, requests, and inquiries.
 - The AER works to respond to setback referrals in 30 business days. Typically, the AER meets this timeframe.
 - However, there are circumstances when the AER requires more information. For example, the AER may follow up with a company to gather the most and up to date information on the facility's sour gas release rate, which is required in order to determine setback distances for pipelines. When this happens, the AER advises applicants of a delay.
- The AER is not considering changes to these requirements as they are in the interest of public safety.
- The AER and Alberta Environment and Parks have met with the MD of Greenview on multiple occasions to discuss their concerns regarding the application process and timelines. These matters are still being reviewed.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) response to this resolution provides an update on AER Bulletin 2013-03 to clarify setback requirements. RMA understands the AER's commitment to public safety through setback requirements for residential and commercial developments in close proximity to sour gas facilities and pipelines. However, this resolution requests that the Government of Alberta and the AER review their setback requirement timelines to ensure they meet their 30-day response commitment. RMA has reported that late responses from the AER have prevented municipalities from meeting their legislated timelines without requesting extensions from applicants. RMA is pleased to hear that there has been communication between the MD of Greenview, the AER and Alberta Environment and Parks, however, the concerns are still being reviewed. RMA assigns this resolution as **Intent Not Met** as AER is not considering any changes to these requirements.

Resolution 10-19F

Community Peace Officer Access to RCMP Radio Channels

Foothills County

Carried

► ***Advocacy Target: Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, Service Alberta, Royal Canadian Mounted Police***

WHEREAS rural municipalities employ community peace officers (CPOs) under the *Peace Officer Act*; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities are responsible for ensuring the safety of CPOs; and

WHEREAS CPOs provide a supplementary level of municipal law enforcement within rural municipalities across Alberta where the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) are the police service of jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS CPOs provide assistance at emergency scenes where timely communication with RCMP members is imperative, both for the officer and public safety; and

WHEREAS the Alberta First Responders Radio Communication System (AFRRCS) was designed and implemented by the Government of Alberta with the intention of improving and integrating radio communications among first responders from different agencies; and

WHEREAS CPOs have historically been provided access to monitor and transmit on RCMP radio channels through the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between individual municipalities and the RCMP; and

WHEREAS the RCMP across Alberta have encrypted their AFRRCS channels which now prevents CPOs from monitoring and transmitting on RCMP radio channels; and

WHEREAS this lack of direct, timely communication between CPOs and RCMP members presents increased officer safety risks for CPOs;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta work with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) 'K' Division and National Headquarters, and any other organizations necessary, to develop policies and/or a memorandum of understanding to permit community peace officers to monitor and transmit on local RCMP Alberta First Responders Radio Communication System radio channels in the normal course of their duties.

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

- In Budget 2020, the Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System (AFRRCS), proposes the transfer of responsibility from Service Alberta to Municipal Affairs.
- AFRRCS was initiated in 2007 under Alberta Justice and Solicitor General to establish the radio system and became operational in 2016.

- First responder agencies in Alberta are currently migrating to AFRRCS as a primary radio system with over 32,000 users currently enrolled.
- The RCMP and provincial Community Peace Officers (CPOs) are both on the AFRRCS.
 - Each organization has separate talk groups on the system.
 - Communication sharing would need to be approved by the RCMP, which has not yet occurred.
 - Not all CPOs are equipped with radios that can support channel encryption, and the RCMP have encrypted all their operational channels.
- The sharing of talk group channels, which are separate and encrypted channels on the network between RCMP and CPOs, is not controlled by AFRRCS and is completely under the control of the user organizations who desire interoperability.
 - The AFRRCS network is functioning as designed and the sharing of talk group channels and encryption is system capability and occurs between other organizations.
- The RCMP and Justice and Solicitor General are aware of the concerns and are working with the CPO community.
 - The issue is not AFRRCS system capability but agreements required between the RCMP and CPO organizations.

Alberta Justice and Solicitor General

Since the implementation of the Alberta First Responders Radio Communication System (AFRRCS), authorized employers of community peace officers (CPO) have expressed concerns about the limitations and impacts of less direct communication with their RCMP counterparts at local detachments. While some of these challenges may have been addressed through local and regional communication protocols, ongoing challenges remained.

RCMP "K" Division is exploring options for facilitating communication between CPOs and the RCMP through AFRRCS. The RCMP has advised that it will be running a six-month pilot project at three sites to assess the viability and options for AFRRCS communication between CPOs and the RCMP. The Town of Okotoks, City of Grande Prairie and Grande Prairie County have been selected as the sites for this pilot project. The pilot project will commence in early 2020.

At the conclusion of the pilot project, consideration will be given to expanding access to CPOs, on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration structure and logistical challenges at each detachment. Strict control over the access to radio communications that involve the RCMP is the essential criteria in the assessment process.

Depending on the outcome of this pilot project, it is possible that not all authorized employers and their CPOs will be granted the permission/privilege of having access to AFRRCS communications with the RCMP. However, all potential avenues to have direct communication with the RCMP will be explored and examined.

The RCMP has requested patience during this critical assessment process and more information will be released following the pilot project.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates that the RCMP is working with Alberta Justice and Solicitor General and three municipalities to pilot enhanced AFRRCS communications between the RCMP and CPOs. RMA appreciates the importance of ensuring any communication protocol including police information is based on a proper balance of information-sharing and security, and therefore the RCMP cannot commit to opening encrypted communication channels to CPOs in all municipalities. However, RMA urges the RCMP and Alberta Justice and Solicitor General to work with the Alberta Association of Community Peace Officers (AACPO) and other relevant organizations to identify what criteria CPOs would be required to meet to access encrypted channels, and support municipalities and CPOs in reaching that criteria to support public safety in as many instances as possible.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Principle** and will be re-assessed based on the outcomes of the pilot project.

Resolution 11-19F

Requirement for Municipal Authority Input on Energy Resource Development Projects

MD of Bonnyville

Carried as amended

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy, Alberta Municipal Affairs, Alberta Energy Regulator**

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta seeks to ensure that members of the public are informed about proposed and existing energy resource developments and can provide input regarding those developments; and

WHEREAS the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) has the authority to choose to direct energy project applicants to modify or supplement their public consultation activities; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities constitute the largest land base in Alberta, and therefore, have relevant and profound knowledge applicable to commercial and industrial developments in their respective municipalities; and

WHEREAS local government is the closest level of government to the people; and

WHEREAS landowners expect municipal authorities to protect the interests of private and public lands within their boundaries on any matter including energy resource development projects; and

WHEREAS the current AER public consultation process renders municipal authorities ineffective at protecting the interests of private and public lands, which is eroding landowner/public trust in provincial and local government;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta directs the Alberta Energy Regulator to incorporate municipal authorities' input into the energy resource development project and change of use approval process.

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

Alberta Municipal Affairs has no input on this resolution, as it is within the mandates of Alberta Energy and the Alberta Energy Regulator.

Alberta Energy

- The AER's approval process provides several opportunities for municipal input to be heard and incorporated into energy development approvals.
- Energy refers this resolution to AER.

Background

- Municipal organizations have been advocating on this issue for the past decade.
- The *Municipal Government Act* clearly articulates that the AER approvals take precedence over municipal approvals.

Alberta Energy Regulator

- Engagement with municipalities is part of a project life cycle. When a company decides to initiate an energy project, it must plan the project, engage stakeholders and indigenous communities, and obtain AER approval before any development can happen.
- The company must first notify anyone who could be affected by the proposed development. Companies are also encouraged by the AER to seek feedback from stakeholders, including municipalities, about proposed projects and to address any concerns early in the process.
- Municipalities can participate in the AER's decision-making process on energy development, by:
 - submitting a statement of concern for us to consider during our review of an application, and
 - participating in AER-led alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and
 - participating in an AER hearing (if their request to participate is approved by the AER).
- The AER has also explored other ways to address concerns expressed by municipalities. This includes proposing a new directive on public involvement.
 - This work has been in development since 2017 with extensive stakeholder engagement including input from municipalities and members of the RMA.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates that municipalities already have an opportunity to participate in the AER project-approval process through the submission of a statement of concern or request to participate in a public hearing. However, the background to resolution 11-19F indicates that these current methods are limiting as they require a municipality to be adversely affected, which requires that the project directly impact municipal infrastructure. The resolution refers to the need for AER to broaden the circumstances in which municipalities can provide input to empower municipalities to advocate on behalf of local property owners who may be adversely affected by a project but lack the ability to participate in the project review process individually.

As the resolution makes clear that current municipal participation processes are not adequate to address municipal and landowner concerns with energy projects, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to advocate on this issue.

Resolution 12-19F

Libraries Act Review and Rural Library Services

Athabasca County and County of Wetaskiwin

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs**

WHEREAS libraries are an important service in rural communities and play a key role in community development; and

WHEREAS rural libraries are distinctly different in size, scope, and service level from libraries in large urban centres; and

WHEREAS the *Libraries Act* provides the legal framework for public library service in Alberta; and

WHEREAS the current version of the *Libraries Act* was adopted in 2007; and

WHEREAS section 14(1) of the *Libraries Regulation* requires a municipal board of any municipality with a population of 10,000 or more to employ a professional librarian that is a graduate of a postgraduate library program; and

WHEREAS the *Libraries Regulation* does not take into consideration population density, distance between service points or number of service points within a municipality; and

WHEREAS the Public Library Grants Program uses the 2016 Alberta Municipal Affairs population lists which do not include the results from the 2016 federal census, and, therefore, 49 rural municipalities receive funding based on their 2011 federal census numbers; and

WHEREAS regional library boards and systems are concerned about the restrictions placed on them by the *Libraries Act*, *Libraries Regulation*, and current library funding mechanisms;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta review the the *Libraries Act* and *Libraries Regulation* through a comprehensive public consultation process;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the review include a focus on amending population density and service point indicators related to requirements for hiring professional librarians;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA requests that the Government of Alberta update population lists to the most recent census information to ensure proper funding is provided to rural library boards.

Government Response

Municipal Affairs

Budget 2019 is good news for library boards across Alberta, as the government has maintained funding in an environment of fiscal restraint.

Operating grants are maintained at the same amount as last fiscal year. This includes grants for Indigenous populations on-reserve and settlement. Over \$30 million will go directly to municipal and regional library boards throughout Alberta this year.

Alberta Municipal Affairs is also maintaining levels of support for public library network services such as:

- SuperNet connectivity (over \$2 million a year);
- interlibrary loan delivery and software (approx. \$1 million a year);
- e-content and e-books – particularly the Read Alberta E-books Project with the Book Publishers of Alberta; and
- services for print-disabled readers.

As part of the government-wide effort to reduce red tape, Municipal Affairs has been holding feedback sessions at libraries across Alberta and has an open online survey. The ministry will consider this resolution along with the other feedback in terms of how to make grant applications easier (while still maintaining levels of library service).

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates that funding for library operating grants has remained steady at \$30 million in budget 2019, as has other related funding. Funding also remained stable in budget 2020. While this stability is appreciated, the response does not address any of the requests within resolution 12-19F, including a public review of the *Libraries Act* and *Libraries Regulation*, a greater focus on population density related to professional librarian hiring requirements, and updating of population lists to determine proper funding is provided to rural library boards.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to advocate on this issue.

Resolution 13-19F

Provincial Extended Producer Responsibility Regulations

Wheatland County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Parks**

WHEREAS recycling reduces the amount of waste going to landfill, and results in new, valuable uses for products otherwise at their end-of-life; and

WHEREAS local governments often must cover the costs of programs for collecting, processing, and marketing recyclable materials in Alberta with ratepayer dollars; and

WHEREAS extended producer responsibility (EPR) is an environmental policy approach in which a producer's responsibility for a product is extended to the post-consumer stage of a product's life cycle; and

WHEREAS waste management and recycling costs are also a significant challenge for rural municipalities with collection points for materials; and

WHEREAS when fully implemented, EPR shifts the costs and operational responsibilities for managing recycling systems from local governments to producers; and

WHEREAS there is currently an advocacy campaign among many organizations and government bodies, including the Recycling Council of Alberta, Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and individual municipalities, to encourage the Government of Alberta to implement EPR regulations;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta join the advocacy campaign to encourage the Government of Alberta to implement extended producer responsibility regulations.

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP)

- AEP commends the RMA for highlighting the importance of waste and recycling in Alberta, and for bringing forward suggestions on how the government can improve in these areas.
- The department recognizes recycling is essential to saving energy, conserving resources and reducing the amount of waste sent to Alberta's landfills.
- AEP remains committed to working with stakeholders to enhance provincial recycling programs.
- Extended producer responsibility is one possible policy tool to improve Alberta's recycling services. The department continues to consider stakeholder recommendations and assess other jurisdictional practices to ensure we are creating meaningful recycling solutions for Albertans.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA appreciates the Government of Alberta's commitment to working with external stakeholders to enhance provincial recycling programs that work for all Albertans. RMA has participated as a project partner in the Alberta Collaborative Extended Producer Responsibility Study (ACES) to provide the rural context for implementing an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system in Alberta. The ACES study

was funded by the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, Canadian Stewardship Services Alliance and the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. ACES outlines a made-in-Alberta vision for EPR for residential packaging and paper products. The study proposes that producers of packaging and paper products in Alberta manage both the financial and operational obligations of collecting their products and finding markets to recycle them. RMA has advocated for an EPR program that has a comparable level of service at a comparable cost in urban municipalities and rural municipalities. The service method and service level may differ due to the cost challenges of servicing large and sparsely-populated areas, but an effective EPR model must make recycling available in a way that is reasonably accessible to rural residents.

RMA has assigned this resolution a status of **Accepted** and will continue to work with the Government of Alberta and external stakeholder to provide the rural perspective so that a recycling program works for all Albertans.

Resolution 14-19F

Provincial Funding for Regional Air Ambulance

Cypress County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Health, Alberta Treasury Board and Finance**

WHEREAS all Albertans deserve access to emergency air ambulance services (both rotary-wing and fixed-wing), and

WHEREAS the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS) provides emergency air ambulance services centered out of Edmonton, Calgary and Grande Prairie, and

WHEREAS response to outlying rural areas of Alberta is limited, and

WHEREAS regionally-operated air ambulance services perform a vital service that complements ground ambulance and STARS air ambulance, and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta does not fund locally- or regionally-operated air ambulance services such as Helicopter Air Lift Operation (HALO) in southeastern Alberta, leaving them to rely wholly on funding from municipalities and donations of private individuals and responsible corporate partners;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta provide funds to locally- and regionally-operated emergency response air ambulance services at the same ratio as Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS) funding;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Alberta commissions an independent review, which includes engagement with the public, industry stakeholders and municipalities across Alberta, of the helicopter emergency medical services system in Alberta.

Government Response

Alberta Health

Alberta Health recognizes the important role that the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS),

Helicopter Air Lift Operation (HALO) and other helicopter emergency medical services (EMS) agencies play as key partners in providing urgent medical care to Albertans.

To improve helicopter EMS in rural and remote areas, AHS is currently conducting a review that will involve engaging with municipalities and the public. As part of the review, AHS will assess current funding relationships and commitments. The review began in November 2019 and is expected to take six to nine months.

Pending the outcomes of the review, the current funding system reflects the significantly different services provided by STARS and by locally and regionally operated emergency response air ambulance services, such as HALO and the Helicopter Emergency Response Organization (HERO). HALO and HERO provide medevac services to the Southern and Northern regions of Alberta respectively, transporting patients to health facilities. STARS provides 24 hours a day critical care level services (including night-flying capabilities) with their employed medical crew (advanced paramedics, nurse paramedics and

emergency physicians). STARS also covers for HALO and HERO areas at night if the call meets the criteria for helicopter service. AHS has a 10-year affiliation agreement with STARS that provides core funding annually for critical care level EMS helicopter services across Alberta. AHS provides fee-for-service funding to HALO and HERO for advanced life support level of service. AHS provided a \$1 million one-time grant to HALO to support its recent purchase of a BK117 helicopter, but has since returned to the fee for service funding model.

Alberta Treasury Board and Finance

Alberta Treasury Board and Finance has no input on this resolution, as it is solely within the mandate of Alberta Health.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA is pleased to hear that AHS is conducting a review of their current relationships that provide helicopter EMS in rural and remote areas of Alberta. The inclusion of municipalities as stakeholders in this consultation is welcome.

In May 2020, HALO urgently requested RMA's support in requesting immediate operating funding from the Government of Alberta. Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, HALO's fundraising revenues decreased significantly to the point where, without provincial funding, they will be forced to cease operations as of July 1, 2020. In response, RMA submitted a letter to the Minister of Health restating the need for a new funding model and asking for an update on the review of helicopter EMS services, as indicated in this resolution, as well as short-term emergency operating funding due to the pandemic. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of RMA and other stakeholders and southern Alberta-based MLAs, the Government of Alberta has indicated that they have no plans to enhance funding support for HALO. Fortunately, HALO received adequate fundraising revenue to maintain operations for the foreseeable future, but the same long-term funding issues remain.

Air ambulance funding mechanisms vary across jurisdictions. In British Columbia, air ambulance services are fully funded by the province. Ontario's ORNGE air ambulance service appears to be funded in a similar manner to STARS. Quebec began a pilot in September 2018 for two helicopter ambulances in partnership with a private operator.

Regarding funding, the Alberta Health response does not indicate any intention to change the current funding model. While the review satisfies the second therefore clause of this resolution, the lack of a commitment to review the funding model does not address the first therefore clause. As a result, this resolution is assigned the status of **Accepted in Part**.

Resolution 15-19F

Provincial Highway Access and Setback Authority

Sturgeon County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Transportation**

WHEREAS a viable provincial highway system with appropriate setbacks from development is important for supporting the long-term economic well-being of the province of Alberta and its municipalities; and

WHEREAS landowners and entrepreneurs want to reinvest in their communities through new developments, often adjacent to the provincial highway system; and

WHEREAS current provincial highway access and development setback requirements can limit the development / economic potential of rural communities, particularly when approved setbacks are restrictive or when roadway improvement costs are applied only to a few adjacent landowners; and

WHEREAS current provincial highway access and development setback requirements do not consider the land use policies or requirements of the municipality, which also has limited authority to influence decisions in this area; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta is seeking to remove needless red tape while still upholding fiscal accountability and ensuring the safety of Albertans;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta engage with the Government of Alberta to reduce red tape that limits rural development or economic potential, through a delegation of additional authority to municipalities to regulate provincial highway access and setback requirements, and a review of the provincial framework in this area to reflect best practices from jurisdictions across Canada.

Government Response

Transportation

Regulation of Provincial Highway Access:

Alberta Transportation regulates access to provincial highways to ensure the safe and efficient operation of transportation corridors. As such, the department requires municipalities to develop Area Structure Plans to enable municipal and provincial coordination of planning, including the location and type of future highway accesses.

Permits are required for any improvement within 300 metres from the highway limit or 800 metres from centre point of an intersection of a provincial highway and a local road. This distance ensures that Alberta Transportation and municipalities work together to minimize the development-related impact of increased traffic on highways. The distance also allows Alberta Transportation to protect future highway realignment plans and apply standards consistently across the province.

Permits consider access requirements to support the movement of goods and people throughout Alberta, leading to a more efficient highway network with reduced delays and improved safety from appropriate access spacing.

Regulation of Setback Requirements:

When Alberta Transportation issues permits, they in part define setback requirements to ensure that growth-related highway upgrades can be completed without impacting adjacent development.

Since the provincial highway system supports development of adjacent lands by providing connections to public roads, Alberta Transportation remains committed to working with municipalities to define setback requirements through pre-subdivision and pre-development planning, such as Area Structure Plans that acknowledge the function of the highway.

Municipal-Provincial Coordination:

In cases where highway intersection improvements are required to facilitate development, the *Municipal Government Act* was amended in 2018 to strengthen municipal authority to collect off-site levies for development-related infrastructure upgrades. The amended legislation helps municipalities to spread the costs of infrastructure across multiple developers and over long periods of time rather than only the adjacent properties.

In support of improved coordination, Alberta Transportation staff are currently updating the Roadside Management Classification map, which guides development applications to ensure that highways are appropriately classified based on the most recent traffic growth, the most recent provincial and municipal planning, and in alignment with national standards.

Alberta Transportation supports maintaining approval authority for highway access and setbacks to ensure consistent application across the province, to protect for future highway alignments, and to preserve the intended function of transportation corridors.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The response from Alberta Transportation does include a discussion of the current role municipalities play in development near provincial highways through the development of area structure plans. However, the Alberta Transportation response is clear that they do not support delegating provincial highway access and setback authority to municipalities. As a result, this resolution is assigned the status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 16-19F

GST for Grants and Subsidies Interpretation

Mountain View County and Northern Sunrise County

Carried

► ***Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs, Alberta Treasury Board and Finance, Canada Revenue Agency***

WHEREAS municipalities undergo routine federal Goods and Services Tax (GST)/Public Service Body (PSB) audits by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA); and

WHEREAS the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) requires that municipal governments establish intermunicipal collaboration frameworks by March 31, 2020 that specify what and how services are funded and delivered with neighbouring municipalities; and

WHEREAS municipalities may enter intermunicipal cost sharing agreements for the purpose of funding services through contributions by regional partners whose rate payers will be using the services provided; and

WHEREAS the CRA's GST/HST Technical Bulletin B-067 provides that a transfer payment made for a public purpose does not constitute a taxable supply; and

WHEREAS when the Town of Peace River underwent a routine GST/PSB audit, the CRA assessed GST on "a supply of a right to enter, to have access to, or to use property of the government, municipality, or other body" and ruled that the "town supplied a right to use the municipal property to other municipalities through the use of cost sharing agreements"; and

WHEREAS the Town of Peace River facilities have a flat payment scale that does not discriminate on the basis of residence and all agreements are specifically worded towards regional benefit;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that the Government of Alberta advocate to the Government of Canada on behalf of the municipalities of Alberta that the Canada Revenue Agency's (CRA) interpretation be reviewed and the tax status of cost-sharing agreements be clarified;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA request that the CRA reassess the 2019 GST/PSB audit on the Town of Peace River regarding the interpretation of the CRA Bulletin on GST for grants and subsidies.

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

Alberta Municipal Affairs is aware of the results of the Town of Peace River's federal Goods and Services Tax audit and is concerned about the possible impact of this ruling. The ministry is awaiting the outcome of the town's appeal of the ruling to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). In the meantime, Minister Madu has written to the federal Minister responsible for the CRA to express his concerns with the ruling. Regardless of the CRA ruling, we continue to believe it is in the best interest of municipalities across the province to be good neighbours by working together to reduce duplication of services and infrastructure, provide more efficient use of tax dollars, and develop coordinated long-term planning.

Alberta Treasury Board and Finance

Alberta Treasury Board and Finance recognizes the concern from municipalities regarding the Canada Revenue Agencies' (CRA) reinterpretation of the CRA Bulletin on GST for grants and subsidies. Alberta Treasury Board and Finance notes that the CRA is solely responsible for the interpretation of GST rules and the interpretation of circumstances specific to the Peace River cost sharing agreements. The provincial government's policy is not to interfere with the application of federal rules in specific cases. It is Alberta Treasury Board and Finance's understanding that the reinterpretation of the CRA Bulletin on GST for grants and subsidies applies consistently across Canada and does not target Alberta specifically. Alberta Treasury Board and Finance recommends that the best approach for resolving this issue is for the Rural Municipalities of Alberta to work with other municipal bodies, both within Alberta and from other provinces, to challenge the federal government if the GST rules are not being applied consistently or if the rules and their application have changed without proper notice. Alberta Treasury Board and Finance would further recommend the Rural Municipalities of Alberta to engage with tax practitioners and obtain legal advice regarding the CRA's reinterpretation of the CRA Bulletin on GST for grants and subsidies.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates a concern with the impact that the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) interpretation and of the tax status of cost-sharing agreements may have on Alberta's municipalities. RMA appreciates that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has informed his federal counterpart of this concern.

The response from Alberta Treasury Board and Finance indicates that it is the Ministry's policy not to interfere in the application of federal rules in specific cases. As the CRA decision has fiscal impact on both municipalities and the province more broadly (as a municipal funding source), RMA is concerned with this lack of response from Treasury Board and Finance.

RMA also continues to work with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to address this issue with the CRA, including through the possible development of a guide or FAQ document to ensure municipalities use language in cost-sharing agreements that minimizes the likelihood of a perception of an exchange of taxable services.

As Municipal Affairs has noted that Minister Madu wrote a letter expressing concern about this issue to the Minister responsible for the CRA, this resolution is assigned the status of **Accepted in Part**.

Resolution 17-19F

Airports Capital Assistance Program Funding for Regional Airports in Canada

County of Grande Prairie

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Transportation, Transport Canada**

WHEREAS regional airports are an important asset for regional community development and essential transportation connectivity to the world; and

WHEREAS the Airports Capital Assistance Program (ACAP) was established in 1995 to fund safety-related infrastructure projects for small and regional airports transferred to local control; and

WHEREAS the current \$38 million annually allocated to ACAP to support over 200 smaller regional airports in Canada has not increased, and Consumer Price Index inflation has not been considered, since the fund's inception; and

WHEREAS adequate ACAP funding is critical to the safety of regional/local airports; and

WHEREAS municipalities cannot be expected to carry the financial burden of maintaining regional airports on their own;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request the Government of Canada to review and increase funding for the Airports Capital Assistance Program (ACAP);

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA request support from all relevant federal, provincial, municipal, and business associations for ACAP funding for regional airports in Canada.

Government Response

Alberta Transportation

The Rural Municipalities of Alberta requested support from all relevant federal, provincial, municipal and business associations for Airports Capital Assistance Program (ACAP) funding for regional airports in Canada. The Government of Alberta is not involved in administering the ACAP program, and is not directly involved in the allocation of funding.

Transport Canada administers the federal ACAP, which provides funding for regional (smaller in size and scale) airports across Canada. The threshold for airports to qualify for ACAP is fewer than 525,000 passengers per year, with a minimum of 1,000 passengers per year on year-round commercial passenger services with regular schedules. The airports should also meet federal certification requirements. The purpose of funding is to maintain or improve safety levels at the airports.

The ACAP has provided total funding of over \$785.9 million since the program launched in 1995, and a number of regional airports in Alberta have received a considerable amount of funding. In 2018, the High Level Airport received close to \$6 million and Fort Chipewyan Airport received over \$1.5 million from ACAP. In 2019, the Grande Prairie airport received close to \$500,000 and the Lloydminster Airport received over \$5 million.

However, Alberta Transportation and the Government of Alberta have advocated Transport Canada and the Government of Canada to reduce the financial burden on airports by reducing airport rents, security fees, and other fees, in order to improve the cost competitiveness of the Canadian aviation system. Increasing the funding for ACAP will assist the airports in the province to provide their much-needed services to the communities, as well as support the economic growth and development of the province's economy.

Alberta Transportation administers the Community Airports Program (CAP), which provides funding to small community airports that do not have regularly scheduled flights for the purpose of rehabilitation and pavement overlays of the primary runway, taxiways, and aprons. Projects approved under CAP are eligible for funding up to 75 per cent of the cost of the project. Municipalities submit requests to Alberta Transportation on behalf of the airport situated within their jurisdiction, along with their commitment to share the cost of the proposed project.

Eligible projects are considered based on the following key criteria: basic need, safety and functionality, impacts on the overall transportation network, number of flights and passengers annually, as well as economic, social, environmental, or innovation benefits to the region. In 2017, CAP allocated \$2 million to fund six airport projects throughout the province. In 2018, eight projects from across the province were approved for a total of \$2.3 million. In 2019, five projects were approved for a total of \$1.7 million.

In addition, small community airports may access infrastructure funding under the Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) administered by Alberta Municipal Affairs. All municipalities are eligible for MSI funding for capital or operating projects. Airports need to work closely with local municipal authorities in order to apply for this funding program. Municipalities determine projects and activities to be funded based on local priorities within the general criteria set out in the program guidelines and are encouraged to take a long-term approach to planning for capital projects.

Eligible projects include capital projects, such as municipal roads, bridges, and regional and community airport facilities or equipment, and operating projects, such as municipal services, planning activities, and assistance to non-profit organizations. Municipalities have been allocated \$9.8 billion since the MSI program launched in 2007. In 2019, MSI was expected to allocate \$671 million in funding. This funding can be used, among others, for airports, if municipalities identify them as key local priorities.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA has not yet received a response from Transport Canada, making it not possible to evaluate the first therefore clause. However, Alberta Transportation's response does clarify their role in funding capital costs for regional airports. While Alberta Transportation is not involved with the ACAP funding, they do administer the Community Airports Program (CAP), which supports small airports. This supports the operation of regional airports outside of the ACAP program. Until a response from Transport Canada is received, this resolution is assigned the status of **Incomplete Information**.

Resolution 19-19F

Water Security in Southern Alberta

MD of Taber

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Parks**

WHEREAS construction of facilities for the purpose of water detention in southern Alberta will provide added capacity for the impoundment of water during high streamflow events and for use during low river flow periods; and

WHEREAS additional water storage in southern Alberta is necessary to ensure water security - a vital component of southern Alberta's economic, social and environmental fabric; and

WHEREAS the rate of fill of several Alberta reservoirs limits the ability to fully use available storage due to inadequate headworks canal conveyance capacity; and

WHEREAS river flows to Saskatchewan via the South Saskatchewan River are regulated under the 1969 Master Agreement on Apportionment Schedule "A" under which Alberta is entitled to use 50% of the flow which would naturally occur in the South Saskatchewan River basin (SSRB) each year, excluding water from the SSRB which is diverted for use in Montana (the apportionable flow); and

WHEREAS the 1969 Master Agreement on Apportionment Schedule "A" also states that provided the actual flow at the confluence of the Red Deer and South Saskatchewan rivers does not drop below 1500 cubic feet per second, Alberta is entitled to use 2.1 million acre feet even if that exceeds 50% of the apportionable flow; and

WHEREAS the lack of water storage means that the historical total flow contributed towards all water-sharing agreements has been greater than the 50% of natural flow in all years; and

WHEREAS increasing climate variability has resulted in a cycle of flood and drought which is becoming increasingly unsustainable as the demand for water from municipal, agricultural and industrial users increases annually and highlights the need for additional water storage; and

WHEREAS irrigation carried out on approximately 4.7% of Alberta's cultivated land base contributes about \$3.6 billion to provincial GDP directly influencing economic growth;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate that the Government of Alberta address water security issues in southern Alberta by constructing additional water storage in southern Alberta for the purpose of buffering flood events and to retain water during periods of shortage.

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Parks

- The Government of Alberta respects the critical role water plays in the economic growth of southern Alberta.
- Alberta has made targeted investments in water infrastructure projects focused on improving overall resiliency to floods and drought.

- Major water users in Alberta have made significant improvements over the last 15 years in terms of water conservation, efficiency and productivity to help improve water availability.
- New storage opportunities are more feasible if the costs and benefits of new infrastructure are shared among the broadest possible number of water users.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA appreciates the acknowledgement from the Government of Alberta that new storage opportunities are more feasible if the costs and benefits of new infrastructure is shared among a broad number of water users. However, the resolution is calling for the government to construct additional water storage in southern Alberta and since there is no indication of construction being started at this time, RMA assigns this resolution as **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 20-19F

Policies for Supporting Community Hospice Associations

County of Stettler

Carried

► ***Advocacy Target: Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, Alberta Community and Social Services***

WHEREAS not-for-profit community hospice associations are increasingly providing post-curative end of life care in rural areas; and

WHEREAS Alberta Health Services (AHS) has no formal policies in place for the placement of patients in community hospice associations or the use of AHS resources within community hospice associations and facilities;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta develop standardized procedures and policies to interface community hospice associations with Alberta Health Services.

Government Response

Alberta Health

Alberta Health continues to engage with AHS to determine rural and palliative and end-of-life care (PEOIC) needs, and there are plans to obtain insights related to service gaps from local hospice societies. Alberta Health also works with the Alberta Hospice Palliative Care Association, which advocates for the needs of community hospices, to understand current and future initiatives and challenges.

The Government of Alberta has committed to investing \$20 million over four years to improving PEOIC by shifting from hospital to community based care; raising awareness of how and when to access PEOIC; developing effective caregiver supports; and establishing education, training, and standards for health professionals.

Following the release of AHS's 2014 Palliative Provincial Framework, efforts were made at expanding palliative care across Alberta, including the delivery of a Rural Palliative In-Home Funding Initiative aimed at increasing palliative home care services in rural areas.

Alberta Community and Social Services

Unfortunately, Alberta Community and Social Services does not have anything to provide on policies supporting Community Hospice Associations.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA is pleased to learn that the Government of Alberta (GOA) is investing \$20 million over four years to improve palliative care in rural communities. The GOA response indicates that part of this funding is to develop training and education, which supports the operative clause in this resolution. Additionally, their engagement with the Alberta Hospice Palliative Care Association is welcomed by RMA. However, as a policy with clear rules outlining how AHS works with hospice and home care organizations has not yet been developed, this resolution is assigned the status of **Accepted in Principle**.

Resolution 21-19F

Cellular 911 Call Answer Fees Increase

Wheatland County

Carried as amended

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Treasury Board and Finance**

WHEREAS twenty public safety answering points (PSAPs) are operated by municipalities in Alberta for the purpose of receiving 911 calls for the vast majority of Alberta communities; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has directed telecom providers and PSAPs to modernize the 911 network, transitioning to IP-based technology, known as Next Generation 911 or NG911 (Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2017-182); and

WHEREAS these mandatory technology changes will provide the public with numerous new access points to emergency services (i.e. through real time texting, video messaging, pictures, etc.); and

WHEREAS the costs associated with modernizing 911 infrastructure and associated changes to ongoing operations will be quite costly for each PSAP; and

WHEREAS the PSAP revenue from landline telephones is declining 3% to 7% per year; and

WHEREAS an increase in the cellular 911 call answer levy, remitted by cellular device users, will assist in offsetting the costs associated with implementing NG 911;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta amend the *Emergency 911 Levy Regulation* and increase the 911 levy payable by cellular device subscribers to \$0.97 per month;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the increased revenues be distributed to the entities operating 911 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs).

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

- The Minister of Municipal Affairs is responsible for the *Alberta Emergency 911 Act* (the Act), which came into force on April 1, 2014.
- There are two regulations under the Act:
 - The Emergency 911 Levy Regulation, administered by Treasury Board and Finance, sets the amount of the 911 levy, and the parameters for how wireless telecommunication providers remit the levy to the Government of Alberta.
 - The Emergency 911 Grants Regulation, administered by Municipal Affairs, allows the Minister to distribute the 911 levy funding through a conditional grant.
 - Under the Act and Regulations, cellphone providers in Alberta have been collecting a monthly 911 levy of \$0.44 per cellphone subscriber since the Act came into effect.
- The Act established the Alberta 911 Program under Municipal Affairs with a mandate to strengthen and support the local delivery of 911 services.

- The funding provided to the 911 centres, known as Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), is used to enhance the delivery of 911 services across the province.
 - There are 20 regional PSAPs in Alberta.
- The \$0.44 levy was set to match the existing land line levy amount, which has been in place for more than 15 years in Alberta.
- Eight other provinces and territories have similar 911 legislation with levies ranging from \$0.43 to \$1.70; the average levy is \$0.74 per month.
 - Alberta's current 911 cell phone levy is the second lowest in Canada.
- In June 2017, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) released Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2017-182.
 - This decision required telecom providers and PSAPs to modernize the 911 network, transitioning to internet protocol-based technology, known as Next Generation 911 (NG911).
 - The CRTC has established that telecom providers and PSAPs must upgrade to NG911 technology before the legacy system is decommissioned on June 30, 2023.
 - The CRTC estimates technology and operating costs for NG911 could more than double for Canadian PSAPs.
- The regulations under the Act expire on March 31, 2021.
 - The Minister of Municipal Affairs has approved proceeding with stakeholder consultation on the Act in spring 2020.
- The Alberta E911 Advisory Association is an independent society comprised of 911 centre managers from across Alberta, the RCMP, Alberta Health Services, and other interested stakeholders.

Recent and related Municipal Affairs initiatives

- The Government of Alberta recognizes the 911 landscape is changing with NG911 and it will have significant impact on Alberta PSAPs.
- 911 program staff have been coordinating with other provinces and contributing to CRTC working groups on the future of 911 in Canada.
- 911 program staff are also conducting research of jurisdictions across Canada to determine how other provinces / territories are legislating and funding 911.
- The Government of Alberta is working with stakeholders to determine estimated NG911 costs and analyze potential funding gaps.

Alberta Treasury Board and Finance

Alberta Treasury Board and Finance has no input on this resolution, as it is within the mandate of Alberta Municipal Affairs.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response acknowledges that the costs of implementing Next Generation 911 services will have significant impact on Alberta PSAPs and that research is underway to determine how best to fund required upgrades. RMA appreciates that the regulation determining the current 911 levy will be reviewed soon and looks forward to participating in the review process. However, as the response indicates no interest in increasing the levy at this time, the resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and will be revisited based on the outcomes of the regulation review process.

Resolution 23-19F

Mandatory Agriculture Education in the Classroom

Lac La Biche County

Carried as amended

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Education, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, Alberta Teachers' Association**

WHEREAS agricultural production in Alberta has historically been and continues to be a major economic force and employer of workers; and

WHEREAS generations ago, most Albertans grew up on the family farm and had an intimate knowledge about how livestock, crops, and other agricultural commodities were raised; and

WHEREAS most Albertans now live in urban non-farm environments and do not have the same level of knowledge about how livestock, crops, and other agricultural commodities are being raised; and

WHEREAS the general public has historically had a high regard for agriculture and farmers as they put food on their table in Alberta, Canada, and the rest of the world; and

WHEREAS modern agriculture in Alberta is being severely tested by concerns about how livestock, crops, and agricultural produce are being raised, especially regarding environmental impacts, animal cruelty, and farm safety; and

WHEREAS many of these concerns stem from a lack of knowledge about agriculture in the general community;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta work with fellow rural stakeholders, Alberta Education, the Alberta Teachers' Association, and all elected school boards to request that mandatory agriculture education be implemented in the school curriculum in Alberta.

Government Response

Education

Science and Social Studies

- The Science and Social Studies curriculums both provide students with opportunities to learn about a wide range of topics, including concepts related to agriculture in Alberta. Additional information is available at www.alberta.ca/programs-of-study.aspx.

Selecting Agriculture-related Classroom Resources that Support Curriculum

- Alberta's provincial Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum outlines what students are expected to know, understand and be able to do in each subject and grade. While Alberta Education determines curriculum content, teachers use their professional judgment to determine how students achieve the learning outcomes in the provincial curriculum.
- School authorities have the autonomy, flexibility and responsibility to determine which supports, resources or programs are most appropriate for their students and school community. This provides Alberta's school jurisdictions with the opportunity to best address

the needs of the students and the communities they serve, using the resources available to them.

Future Curriculum

- Our government is committed to providing students in Alberta with the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed in their chosen careers.
- Government established an independent curriculum advisory panel to provide a new vision for student learning, as well as recommendations on the direction for future Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum.
- A new online survey is available until February 24, 2020 for Albertans to provide input on the draft vision for student learning. This feedback, along with the recommendations from the curriculum advisory panel, will help guide our work as we move forward with updating the curriculum.

Agriculture and Forestry

The Government of Alberta is committed to the continued growth of Alberta's agriculture and agri-food industries. With the increasing disconnect between Alberta's growing urban population and their rural neighbours, government recognizes the need to connect consumers with where their food comes from. To facilitate public understanding of industry, government has taken concrete steps to supporting agriculture education in our province.

Alberta Education and Alberta Agriculture and Forestry has developed the Green Certificate Program, a dual-credit program where students can earn both high school credits and an industry certification in a variety of agriculture career paths. Students select a specialization and, under the guidance of a trainer, work towards mastering all of the skills within their training program. Upon completion, the trainee receives 16, grade-12 credits.

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry is committed to working with Alberta Education as it reviews curriculum to find ways to integrate agriculture into Alberta's K-12 core courses like science and social

studies. Currently, agriculture is represented in subjects like Social Studies, Science, Foods, and Health, but many teachers do not have the knowledge or the resources to be able to integrate agriculture themes into the curriculum. To facilitate getting agriculture into classrooms, Agriculture and Forestry developed a Canadian Agricultural Partnership Public Trust Youth Agriculture Education Grant for industry organizations and education organizations to develop curriculum-linked programs that build public trust in agriculture. The grant has \$2 million dollars allocated over the five-year agreement. The Classroom Agriculture Program organization, which you specifically mention in the Member Background of your resolution, is eligible to apply for funding for any new initiatives they may have, or to expand their current program.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

While the Government of Alberta response does outline how agricultural topics may be included in classroom education, it does not indicate action to have mandatory education in agricultural topics for all Alberta students. As a result, this resolution is assigned the status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution ER1-19F

Dissolution of Mandatory Growth Management Boards

Rocky View County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs**

WHEREAS previous provincial governments created mandatory growth management boards (GMBs) in the Edmonton and Calgary metropolitan regions; and

WHEREAS the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) states that the purpose of a GMB is to provide for integrated and strategic planning for future growth in municipalities; and

WHEREAS the MGA states that Alberta's municipalities, governed by democratically-elected officials, are empowered to provide responsible and accountable local governance to create and sustain safe and viable communities; and

WHEREAS under the MGA, rural municipalities have equal rights and standing to urban municipalities to make land use decisions and pursue economic development; and

WHEREAS the creation of mandatory GMBs with a double-majority governance structure introduces a fourth level of unelected government, creating significant additional layers of oversight and bureaucracy which cause delays and impede economic development, investment opportunities, and job creation; and

WHEREAS the Edmonton- and Calgary-region GMBs diminish local government autonomy and provide little or no value to residents of member municipalities, particularly rural residents, whose democratic rights are greatly reduced as a result of the GMBs; and

WHEREAS increased red tape and approval timelines, coupled with increased uncertainty as to approvals of development areas, is a risk to attracting and retaining business, investment, and jobs in Alberta;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate that the Government of Alberta remove mandatory growth management boards (GMBs) from the *Municipal Government Act*;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate that the Government of Alberta strengthen existing regulatory tools and mechanisms to encourage and incentivize regional cooperation with respect to land use planning and service delivery to residents;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that should the Government of Alberta fail to abolish mandatory GMBs, the RMA shall advocate to amend the current voting structure to remove double majority vetoes and ensure the interests of all members of a GMB are equally considered and represented;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that should the Government of Alberta fail to abolish the mandatory GMBs, the RMA shall advocate to implement an independent appeal process for members to appeal decisions of the GMB that may have a detrimental impact on a member;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that should the Government of Alberta fail to abolish the mandatory GMBs, the RMA request that the Government of Alberta amend the Regional Evaluation Framework and the

Interim Regional Evaluation Framework for the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board and the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board respectively.

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs recognizes the ongoing challenge of balancing the needs of rural and urban municipalities, residents, and business and industry. The growth management boards were created in response to intermunicipal disputes that delayed development and economic growth at substantial costs to the municipalities and developers involved, and in recognition that regional growth planning contributes to the overall economic success of a region.

Municipal Affairs is reviewing the growth management boards to ensure they are meeting their intended objectives, and will be inviting input from the member municipalities on solutions to current challenges facing the boards. Strong regional collaboration continues to be key to ensuring the Calgary and Edmonton metropolitan regions are globally competitive and prosperous.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates that a review of growth management boards (GMBs) will take place soon and provide member municipalities an opportunity to provide input on solutions to challenges facing the boards. Unfortunately, the resolution response provides no information related to the specific changes to GMBs requested in resolution ER1-19F, including the removal of mandatory GMBs from the *Municipal Government Act*, or alternatively, strengthening of tools to incentivize regional collaboration within GMBs, the development of a more equitable GMB voting structure, an independent appeal process, or amendments to regional evaluation frameworks.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to advocate on this issue.

Section 2: Advocacy Report Card

The following table is a summary of RMA's current resolutions excluding the resolutions adopted in fall 2019, which are detailed in Section 1. Recent developments on the resolutions are detailed below in the corresponding categories, and readers are reminded that although resolution statuses may remain unchanged, work on each resolution is ongoing. Each resolution has a three-year lifespan to reflect the nature of shifting government policy development and timelines associated with legislative changes and implementation.

Resolutions at a Glance

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
AGRICULTURE		
2-19S	Access to Agriculture-Specific Mental Health Resources	Intent Not Met
6-19S	Prevent Implementation of Seed Royalty on Producers for Farm Saved Seed	Intent Not Met
19-18F	Separation of Industrial Hemp from Cannabis Regulations	Accepted
4-18S	Support for Continuation of Grant Funding for Agricultural Initiatives Program	Intent Not Met
8-17F	Provincial Communications Plan for Farm Workplace Legislation	Intent Not Met
ER2-17F	Continued Provincial Funding Support for Agriculture Service Boards and Agricultural Societies	Accepted
BROADBAND AND CONNECTIVITY		
3-18F	Federal and Provincial Funding of Municipal Broadband Projects	Accepted in Part
4-18F	Enabling High-Speed Internet Access for Rural Alberta	Intent Not Met
13-18F	TELUS Failure to Maintain Landline Operations	Incomplete Information
COMMUNITY SERVICES		
10-18F	Community Peace Officer Access to the Canadian Police Information Centre	Intent Not Met

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
21-18F	Scrap Metal (Copper) Theft	Accepted in Part
24-18F	Review of Education Funding Formula	Accepted
EMERGENCY SERVICES		
12-17F	Specialized Clinical Counselling and Therapy for Distressed Emergency First Responders	Accepted in Principle
18-17F	Integrate Emergency Social Services into Emergency Management at Provincial Level	Accepted
ENERGY		
1-19S	Municipal Support for the Energy Industry	Accepted
7-19S	Solar Power Reclamation	Accepted
5-18F	Alberta Energy Regulator Requirements for Acquiring and Holding Energy Licences and Approval	Intent Not Met
12-18F	Multi-Stakeholder Committee to Work at Reducing the Use of Potable Water by the Oil and Gas Industry in Alberta	Intent Not Met
14-18F	Reclamation of Non-Producing Oil and Gas Sites on Agricultural Lands Owned by Bankrupt Companies	Intent Not Met
16-18F	Demand Meters and Rate Riders	Intent Not Met
6-18S	Wind Energy Regulations Required at Provincial Level	Intent Not Met
10-18S	Tenure Extension Requirements for Unconventional Development	Intent Not Met
5-17F	Alberta Energy Regulator – Amendment to Transfer Approval Process	Intent Not Met
10-17F	Provincial Industry-led Methane Flaring Strategy	Accepted in Principle
6-17F	Financial Support from AAMDC for Appeal of Virginia Hills/Dolomite Decision	Accepted
ENVIRONMENT		

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
4-19S	Bighorn Country Proposal Consultation	Accepted in Principle
5-19S	Amendments Required for Crown Land Recreation Disposition Applications and Renewals	Intent Not Met
9-19S	Watershed Planning and Advisory Council Funding	Intent Not Met
11-19S	Update of the Provincial Code of Practice for Compost Facilities	Intent Not Met
7-18F	Municipal and Privately-Owned Protected Areas Inventory	Intent Not Met
9-18F	Impact of the Alberta Wetland Policy on the Cost of Maintaining Public Road Infrastructure	Intent Not Met
11-18F	Rural Municipalities of Alberta Represents Municipalities on <i>Water Act</i> Approvals	Accepted in Principle
15-18F	Wetland Mitigation Directive – Restoration and Compensation	Accepted
17-18F	Alberta Environment and Parks Additional Resources for <i>Water Act</i> Approvals	Intent Not Met
20-18F	Decommissioning Costs for Wind Energy Developments	Accepted
22-18F	Amendment to the Wildlife Regulations Regarding Cougars	Intent Not Met
8-18S	Amendments Required for Provincial Recycling Regulations	Intent Not Met
9-18S	Exemption of Seniors Housing from Requirement to Pay Carbon Levy	Accepted in Part
11-18S	Recycling of Solar Panels	Intent Not Met
2-17F	Completion of Alberta's Land-use Framework Prior to Establishment of Conservation and Protected Areas for Species at Risk	Accepted in Principle
3-17F	Municipal Action on Caribou Recovery Planning	Intent Not Met
4-17F	<i>Water Act</i> Approvals for Municipal Projects on Municipal Land	Intent Not Met
HEALTH & SENIORS		
12-19S	Making Children's Healthcare a Priority in Alberta	Accepted in Part

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
8-18F	Restricting the Consumption of Cannabis based on Regulations for Liquor Consumption	Intent Not Met
14-17F	<i>Cannabis Act</i>	Intent Not Met
INDUSTRY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT		
ER1-17F	Support for Trans Mountain Expansion Project	Accepted
MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE		
8-19S	Reinstatement of the Municipal Officer's Expense Allowance	Accepted
2-18F	Annual Release Date of Assessment Year Modifiers	Intent Not Met
6-18F	Securing Municipal Property Taxes in the Event of Bankruptcy or Insolvency	Intent Not Met
1-18S	Request for Implementation of the 2018 Assessment Year Modifier for Well and Pipeline Assessments	Intent Not Met
1-17F	Centralization of Industrial Properties Assessment	Intent Not Met
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT		
18-18F	Utility Conflict in Municipal Right of Ways	Intent Not Met
7-18S	Standards for Property Contaminated by Fentanyl and Carfentanil	Accepted in Part
19-17F	Builder Licensing Program Impacts	Intent Not Met
POLICING AND RURAL CRIME		
2-18S	Combatting Rural Crime	Accepted in Part
3-18S	Increase Crown Prosecutor Staffing Levels for Rural Municipalities	Intent Not Met
12-18S	Victim Services Units Funding	Intent Not Met
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE		
3-19S	Light Weight Concrete Bridge Girders	Intent Not Met

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
1-18F	Provincial Contribution to Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program	Intent Not Met
OTHER		
10-19S	Strategic Direction for the RMA	Accepted
23-18F	Social Well-Being of An Employee and Domestic Violence – <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act</i>	Accepted in Part
5-18S	Provincial Government Consultation and Communication Protocol with Municipalities	Intent Not Met
9-17F	AAMDC Refusal to Engage in Exploratory Discussion to Merge with AUMA	Accepted
13-17F	AAMDC Advisory Committee to Support the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission in Reviewing Charitable Gaming in Alberta	Accepted
15-17F	Stopping the Implementation of Proposed Federal Tax Reforms	Accepted in Part
ER3-17F	Effective Representation for Rural Albertans in Alberta's Legislative Assembly	Intent Not Met

AGRICULTURE

Resolution 2-19S

Access to Agriculture-Specific Mental Health Resources

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response highlights existing mental health resources, including 24/7 help lines that are accessible in rural areas. The Alberta Health response also includes a budget commitment to increase funding for addictions and mental health services by \$100 million. However, there is no indication as to how this additional funding will be distributed geographically in Alberta. The Alberta Health response also identifies the possibility for rural municipalities to provide Health Link – 811 with local resources that are available for farm families; Health Link can then provide this information to those that call in from that area. As follow up, RMA staff will reach out to Health Link about how to best facilitate this information-sharing, and contact Farm Management Canada to explore the possibility of providing input into their study on mental health and farm business.

The Government of Saskatchewan operates a 24/7 Farm Stress Line that provides farm families with resources. The Farm Stress Line is answered by Mobile Crisis Services, a non-profit organization providing crisis intervention services in Saskatchewan since 1974.

Because the government responses do not commit to an agriculture-specific mental health line, or any funding for this resource, this resolution is assigned the status of **Intent Not Met**. While the response from Alberta Health does not satisfy the intent of the resolution, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food has recommended that the Government of Canada expand agriculture-specific mental health resources. RMA will continue to monitor developments at the federal level and advocate to Alberta Health for an agriculture-specific mental health line.

Resolution 6-19S

Prevent Implementation of Seed Royalty on Producers for Farm Saved Seed

Status: Intent Not Met

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”.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) response outlines the rationale for seed royalties on farm saved seed: to increase research investment in Canada’s cereal sector.

CFIA also acknowledges the interest of farmers to save seed for their own use in the next growing season. A planned online consultation for spring 2019 was delayed, and there has not been an update since. An industry-led pilot, separate from the CFIA program, is set to launch in 2020 using a seed variety use agreement for three crop varieties. Because RMA has not received notice that the program is formally ending, this resolution is assigned the status of **Intent Not Met**. RMA will continue to engage with CFIA through consultations on this topic.

Resolution 19-18F

Separation of Industrial Hemp from Cannabis Regulations

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to classify industrial hemp as an agriculture product.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates the clarification of jurisdiction from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. Given that there is no provincial regulation or Act limiting industrial hemp production, reclassifying industrial hemp at a provincial level is unnecessary in Alberta if a producer is approved federally through the *Cannabis Act*.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 4-18S

Support for Continuation of Grant Funding for Agricultural Initiatives Program

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to re-instate or replace the Agriculture Initiatives Program funding for local agricultural societies.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA recognizes the fiscal challenges faced by the Government of Alberta and is encouraged by the three-year funding commitment to agriculture societies in Alberta and the eligibility of agriculture societies under the Community Facility Enhancement Program and Community Initiatives Program. However, these grants were previously available, require agriculture societies to compete for funding with other non-profit organizations, and do not adequately substitute for the loss of the Agriculture Initiatives Program (AIP), which was specifically available for capital funding for agriculture societies. Therefore, the resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 8-17F

Provincial Communications Plan for Farm Workplace Legislation

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties request that the Government of Alberta develop and implement a communications plan to advise Alberta's agriculture sector of actual and intended changes regarding workplace legislation, with the outcome of establishing increased awareness and effective change management.

DEVELOPMENTS: The *Farm Freedom and Safety Act* (FFSA) received royal assent on December 5, 2019. The FFSA replaces the *Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act*, the original legislation which was the subject of this resolution. The Government of Alberta webpage contains highlights of the new legislation, however it does not contain information on a communications plan. As a result, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**. RMA will monitor the communication of the requirements under the new legislation.

Resolution ER2-17F

Continued Provincial Funding Support for Agriculture Service Boards and Agricultural Societies

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties strongly encourage the continued financial support through the Alberta Lottery program or a similar program for agriculture service boards and agricultural societies beyond 2017-2018.

DEVELOPMENTS: As announced at the RMA 2018 Spring Convention, agriculture service boards and agricultural societies will see a three-year funding commitment starting in the provincial budget 2018-19. The 2019-20 budget maintains the previous funding commitment. Additionally, ASBs are now eligible for five-year operating grants. This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

BROADBAND AND CONNECTIVITY

Resolution 3-18F

Federal and Provincial Funding of Municipal Broadband Projects

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the governments of Alberta and Canada to provide direct funding to municipalities to support rural, remote and northern communities' development of high speed (50 megabits per second and faster) community broadband, with federal government grants matching municipal and provincial investment in broadband network infrastructure.

DEVELOPMENTS: Regarding provincial funding, RMA appreciated the efforts of Service Alberta to develop a long-term strategy for Albertans accessing high speed internet. However, there is not a budget commitment to fund rural broadband.

The response from the CRTC indicates that municipalities are eligible to receive funding from the Broadband Fund if they, or a partner, meet the applicant eligibility requirements. RMA understands that this will allow municipalities who can meet the eligibility requirements on their own will not need to partner with an ISP, in addition to all municipalities having the option to apply for funding if they partner with an experienced ISP.

The Government of Canada has announced their plan to provide high speed internet to all Canadians by 2030. This plan is supported by a proposed budget announcement of \$1.7 billion in new funding, with an additional \$1 billion in financing to be made available from the Canada Infrastructure Bank. \$750 million over five years has been allocated to the Broadband Fund, with the funding for years four and five contingent on a review of the fund in year three (2021). RMA is pleased to see a funding commitment made to provide broadband internet access in rural and remote areas.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part** and will be monitored for additional funding announcements and details of the existing federal budgetary announcement.

Resolution 4-18F

Enabling High-Speed Internet Access for Rural Alberta

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) urge the Government of Alberta to deliver a comprehensive rural broadband strategy that realizes the path forward for all residents of rural Alberta to achieve the CRTC's universal service objective targets of 50 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload for fixed broadband services;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA emphasize to the Government of Alberta that, for economic, political, and social concerns, the completed strategy should be made available to the public in the shortest possible time;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that such a strategy should include the following components to best serve the interests of rural Albertans and to facilitate the effective implementation of the strategy in pursuit of its goals.

- I. That the Government of Alberta should mandate (where legally permissible) and advocate for (where not within the scope of their authority) common carrier/shared access laws to allow for the more efficient deployment of infrastructure.
- II. That the Government of Alberta should incent partnerships and cooperation between municipalities, the Province, and private industry to develop rural broadband infrastructure, providing matching funds for qualified infrastructure deployments.
- III. That the Government of Alberta should enable significantly more affordable access to the Supernet for Albertans, through their relationship with Bell Canada, to provide backhaul access for local network solutions.
- IV. That the strategy should enhance competitive access to the broadband industry in Alberta for more businesses and should promote an increasingly competitive business environment.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates the consultation on a provincial broadband policy and the Government of Alberta's willingness to advocate to their federal counterparts. However, there is not yet a publicly available provincial broadband strategy or draft.

RMA is pleased with an acknowledgement of wholesale and backhaul services available for purchase in SuperNet communities, however the cost of accessing these services is not addressed in Service Alberta's response.

As a result of a lack of publicly available provincial broadband strategy or draft, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**. As policies change the status of this resolution will be monitored.

Resolution 13-18F

TELUS Failure to Maintain Landline Operations

Status: Incomplete Information

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that Service Alberta direct TELUS to maintain their complete landline network until such time that there are assurances that the wireless system is as secure, economical and stable as the previous landline system has been;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA request that the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) review the original agreement with TELUS to ensure they are meeting their responsibilities.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA has not yet received a response to this resolution from the CRTC.

RMA appreciates the response from Service Alberta and their offer to discuss maintenance of the landline network with TELUS. RMA will contact ISED regarding this issue.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Incomplete Information** and will continue to advocate on this issue.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Resolution 10-18F

Community Peace Officer Access to the Canadian Police Information Centre

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that Alberta Justice and Solicitor General work with the Canadian Police Information Centre, and any other Ministry necessary, to provide direct, mobile and timely Canadian Police Information Centre access to Community Peace Officers that can be used as a proactive and preventative tool within defined guidelines.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates an ongoing collaborative effort between the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General and other organizations to ensure that community peace officers (CPOs) have adequate access to Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC). The short-term commitment of five-minute processing time through Sheriffs Operations Control Centres and the long-term commitment enabling direct access through in-car laptops to eligible CPIC officers is encouraging.

In addition to the resolution response, RMA has learned that Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Alberta Association of Community Peace Officers have jointly requested that CPO access to CPIC be facilitated through the Provincial Radio Control Centre (PRCC), which is under the jurisdiction of Service Alberta. RMA has formally supported this request. As of December 2019, RMA has learned that the process for facilitation of CPO access to CPIC has stalled, and access through the PRCC is not likely to occur, although the organizations mentioned above are still discussing potential options to facilitate access.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and will be updated when direct CPO access to CPIC commences.

Resolution 21-18F

Scrap Metal (Copper) Theft

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to proclaim the *Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act* and create the regulation to assist with the deterrence of copper theft and other scrap metal.

DEVELOPMENTS: The initial Government of Alberta response indicated that action was being taken on scrap metal theft in the form of a cross-ministry working group that would review the *Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act* as well as other potential options for addressing copper theft.

On November 5, 2019, Alberta's Lieutenant Governor proclaimed the *Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act* into force. The Act includes an immediate requirement for scrap metal dealers and recyclers to report suspected stolen property to authorities. Regulations outlining requirements on dealers and recyclers to obtain proof of identification from sellers,

record and retain details of transactions and share information with law enforcement are expected to be in place by spring 2020.

RMA is pleased with the Government of Alberta's progress on this issue. The resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part** pending the implementation of an accompanying regulation.

Resolution 24-18F

Review of Education Funding Formula

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta supports the Alberta School Boards Association position that the Government of Alberta review the K-12 funding formula for schools and school boards.

DEVELOPMENTS: In budget 2019, the Government of Alberta committed to reviewing and replacing the current education funding formula with a new "K-12 Assurance and Funding Framework" that will come into effect in September 2020 for the 2020-21 school year. The transition to the new Framework is based on a recommendation earlier in 2019 from the *Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta's Finances* which called for a shift in education funding to "provide incentives for sharing services and achieving better student outcomes." According to the Government of Alberta's 2019-23 Fiscal Plan, the new Framework will, among other things, "assure the long-term viability of rural schools."

Following a review of the formula and stakeholder consultations in early 2020, the Government of Alberta announced a new funding framework in February 2020, for implementation in the 2020/2021 school year.

The new model introduces a Rural Small Schools Grant, which provides rural small schools (those in rural areas or in population centres below 30,000) with guaranteed block funding based on broad enrollment categories. This provides rural small schools with greater funding certainty as annual funding will not fluctuate to the same extent as under the previous model.

The model also introduces a Geographic Grant, which provides additional funding to school jurisdictions to address unique geographic challenges such as rurality, sparsity-distance, area, and location.

Based on the completion of the review and the consideration of rural school funding in the new model, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Resolution 12-17F

Specialized Clinical Counselling and Therapy for Distressed Emergency First Responders

Status: Accepted in Principle

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties strongly encourages the Government of Alberta to create and staff a governmental unit capable of providing specialized clinical counselling and therapy for distressed emergency first responders capable of servicing and travelling to all regions of the Province.

DEVELOPMENTS: The overall Government of Alberta response indicates a wide range of existing preventative and post-incident mental health support systems for emergency first responders, as well as ongoing activities to enhance and broaden such services in the wake of first responders' roles in responding to recent natural disasters in Alberta.

The Alberta Health response indicates a current initiative to deliver regional reintegration training for paramedics suffering psychological injuries with the goal of supporting their return to work. Similarly, the Alberta Municipal Affairs response indicates an effort to improve the coordination and accessibility of multiple separate programs supporting the mental health of first responders. These examples both align with the intent of the resolution, which is to centralize mental health supports for first responders under a single "governmental unit" with the capability to provide such services in all regions of the province. RMA is also pleased by the Government of Alberta's December 2018 announcement of an emergency medical services (EMS) action plan, which includes one million dollars in funding to support the mental health of EMS workers.

RMA appreciates the efforts of the Government of Alberta in supporting the mental health of first responders. As the government response reflects elements of the centralized, mobile unit requested in the operative clause, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Principle**, and RMA will follow up with Alberta Health and Municipal Affairs to determine whether the changes references will meaningfully improve the integration and mobility of first responder mental health support services.

RMA is also pleased by the Government of Canada's recent announcement of a \$29 million plan to address mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder in emergency personnel, including \$10 million for an "internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy pilot" to improve access to care for emergency personnel. RMA looks forward to learning more about the details of this program and how it will support emergency first responders operating in rural areas.

Resolution 18-17F

Integrate Emergency Social Services into Emergency Management at Provincial Level

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties urge the Government of Alberta to consolidate emergency social services and emergency management into a single government ministry with a single emergency coordination centre to eliminate duplication and enhance coordination of provincial support to local authorities.

DEVELOPMENTS: The government response indicates that in response to challenges responding to disasters in 2013 and 2016, the Government of Alberta has recently integrated emergency social services into the broader Provincial Operations Centre to better coordinate immediate emergency management with the provision of emergency social services. Based on this response, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted**.

Additionally, RMA is pleased by the Government of Alberta's announcement of integration of Alberta Emergency Alert with a new national emergency alert system, which will further improve the efficiency by which first responders and the public can become aware of emergency situations.

ENERGY

Resolution 1-19S

Municipal Support for the Energy Industry

Status: Accepted

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: In December 2019, the Government of Alberta launched the Canadian Energy Centre (commonly referred to as the "energy war room") in an effort to promote and combat misinformation about Alberta's energy industry. The energy war room is broken into three sections:

- A rapid-response unit which is responsible for issuing swift responses to misinformation about Alberta's oil and gas industry through social media.
- An energy literacy unit which will create original content to elevate the general understanding of Alberta's energy sector and help the province take control of its energy story.
- A data and research unit which will centralize and analyze data to reinforce Alberta's energy story with factual evidence from investors, researchers and policy makers.

In addition to the war room, the Government of Alberta has also launched a public inquiry into foreign funding of anti-energy campaigns, with the plan to ban foreign money from interfering in Alberta politics.

RMA appreciates the Government of Alberta's confirmation that the Petrochemicals Diversification Program will continue and that two projects have already been approved under this program. These projects will help revitalize Alberta's natural gas sector resulting in job creation and economic growth. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 7-19S

Solar Power Reclamation

Status: Accepted

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that this resolution is not within the mandate of the Alberta Utilities Commission. However, Alberta Environment and Parks has amended the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation to include renewable energy operation as an activity requiring reclamation at end of life. Under the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation, security, such as cash, must be submitted by the operator to the Government of Alberta to account for reclamation costs. If an operator fails to comply with the Conservation and Reclamation Directive, then the security will be used for the reclamation at end of life for renewable resources. As a result of the inclusion of renewable energy operations in the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation, RMA assigns this resolution as **Accepted**.

Resolution 5-18F

Alberta Energy Regulator Requirements for Acquiring and Holding Energy Licences and Approval

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate that the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) be required to ensure that there are no outstanding municipal property taxes before licenses are transferred, including licensed properties declared as “Orphan Sites”;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that outstanding property taxes form part of the liability rating for oil and gas companies;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that oil and gas companies be required to post deposits in the amount of all outstanding municipal property taxes before they can apply for a license or transfer, and that these deposits are forwarded to the municipality from the AER upon the approval of the license or transfer.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that although many factors are considered during the process of reviewing and approving a license transfer and within the AER’s liability management rating (LMR), payment of municipal property taxes is not among them. RMA appreciates that Alberta Energy is working to improve the LMR and overall liability management system and is considering input from RMA and Alberta Municipal Affairs related to the extent to which outstanding municipal taxes should be considered part of a company’s LMR. In 2019, the Government of Alberta announced they were seeking advice and input from stakeholders and the public on ways to improve the AER. RMA board members were invited to an in-person stakeholder workshop with other municipal leaders to discuss areas of improvement with the AER’s mandate and systems operations. One comment RMA put forward was rural municipalities are facing significant issues surrounding the transfer of assets. Under AER’s Directive 006, a company that sells assets or becomes insolvent must submit an application to the AER. However, this process does not inform municipalities of a change in asset ownership, often resulting in municipalities being unable to recover unpaid property taxes from the previous owner. The committee noted RMA’s comment and RMA is currently waiting to hear back from the government with the recommendations and changes from the consultation process. However, as rural municipalities are faced with mounting unpaid taxes related to oil and gas infrastructure, this issue must be addressed urgently.

RMA is also concerned with AER's comments that imposing conditions on license transfers due to unpaid municipal taxes is beyond their jurisdiction, while also encouraging municipalities to intervene in the transfer approval process due to unpaid taxes. Based on the response, it is unclear what purpose this would serve, as it appears that AER could not alter the transfer approval process due to unpaid municipal taxes.

According to a 2020 RMA survey, rural municipalities are currently facing a deficit of \$173 million in unpaid property taxes from the oil and gas industry. Based on the Government of Alberta response, there are no current provisions available in the transfer approval and liability management systems to address unpaid municipal taxes, and limited interest in expanding either process to do so. Given that lack of payment of municipal taxes is often a sign of financial distress for companies, and may lead to further abandonment of other commitments, RMA urges the Government of Alberta to include this within the scope of the AER (as they are the primary oversight body for oil and gas operations in the province).

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to advocate on this issue.

Resolution 12-18F

Multi-Stakeholder Committee to Work at Reducing the Use of Potable Water by the Oil and Gas Industry in Alberta

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to immediately strike a multi-stakeholder committee to work at reducing the use of potable water and explore alternate options for use by the oil and gas industry in Alberta.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response provides a detailed overview of current water use by the oil and gas industry, as well as current legislation, policies and initiatives in place to conserve water usage and reclaim water used by industry. While this information is encouraging, it does not address the intent of the resolution to form a committee and the larger underlying fact that RMA members believe more can be done to reduce industrial water use.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**, and will continue to advocate for the formation of a committee on this issue.

Resolution 14-18F

Reclamation of Non-Producing Oil and Gas Sites on Agricultural Lands Owned by Bankrupt Companies

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Orphan Well Association prioritize the reclamation of abandoned oil and gas sites on the following basis:

- 1. Health, safety and environmental needs**
- 2. Agricultural land**
- 3. All other lands**

DEVELOPMENTS: The response by the Government of Alberta indicates that public safety and environmental protection are priorities in the reclamation of oil and gas wells, although the actual prioritization process is completed by the Orphan Well Association (OWA). The OWA has released an update on how the reclamation process of abandoned oil and gas sites is conducted. Phase 1 of the Assessment is to identify any potential concerns that may warrant further investigation. Phase 2 of the Assessment involves soil and ground water samples to be collected and sent to a laboratory for analysis. If any soil or groundwater is contaminated, it will be a priority for reclamation. RMA has assigned this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**, as the OWA reclamation process does not consider the type of land being impacted or provide any priority rating to agricultural lands. RMA will continue to monitor the progress of the OWA reclamation process of abandoned oil and gas wells.

Resolution 16-18F

Demand Meters and Rate Riders

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Alberta Utilities Commission create a separate rate class for municipal buildings and recreational facilities and require that all demand meters are reset and billed accordingly on a monthly basis.

DEVELOPMENTS: Based on this resolution, the RMA was contacted about participating Electric System Distribution Inquiry and the RMA has submitted their intention to provide input during this process. Currently, the RMA is awaiting additional information regarding phase II proceedings and will bring the intent of this resolution forward at this time. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 6-18S

Wind Energy Regulations Required at Provincial Level

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request the Government of Alberta to undertake the creation of a Renewable Energy Division within the AER to approve, regulate, and enforce the responsible development, reclamation, and assessment of renewable energy projects in the Province of Alberta;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that renewable energy projects formally proceeding into the review and approval stage of the above-noted Renewable Energy Division are to be corporately approved and construction ready projects, not speculative or conditional in any way;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA request the Government of Alberta to set up and enforce the collection of monetary funds towards the implementation of an Orphan Renewable Energy Fund to oversee potential future reclamation of abandoned renewable energy sites.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA recognizes the important work that has been undertaken to improve the regulatory process for wind energy projects and other renewable energy projects, and RMA

appreciates the opportunity to be involved in many of these important discussions such as the creation of an updated reclamation standard for renewable energy.

Although this resolution speaks to the creation of an approving and regulating body within the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER), the broader intent of this resolution is the responsible regulation of Alberta's renewable energy resources and projects. Alberta Environment and Parks has amended the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation to include renewable energy operation as an activity requiring reclamation at end of life. Under the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation, security, such as cash, must be submitted by the operator to the Government of Alberta to account for reclamation costs. If an operator fails to comply with the Conservation and Reclamation Directive, then the security will be used for the reclamation at end of life for renewable resources. However, given the specific nature of this resolution and its focus on the creation of a fund for orphan renewable energy projects, it is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to work with members and the Government of Alberta to improve economic, social, and environmental outcomes for renewable energy.

Resolution 10-18S

Tenure Extension Requirements for Unconventional Development

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) requests the Government of Alberta review and examine tenure extension requirements for unconventional resource development, removing the need for industry to plan activities around securing tenure, and thereby allowing more orderly development and reduced impact on the environment.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta's response indicates some progress made from the from the area-based regulation pilot project that occurred in the MD of Greenview, but the intent of the resolution is not addressed through the pilot or other means, as the tenure system remains the same. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and the RMA will continue to work with the Government of Alberta to fulfill the intent of this resolution.

Resolution 6-17F

Financial Support from AAMDC for Appeal of Virginia Hills/Dolomite Decision

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, through financial resources, support Northern Sunrise County in the legal fees associated with this appeal in an act of solidarity as the overruling of this case is imperative for all municipalities that are owed taxes and outstanding penalties from insolvent organization.

DEVELOPMENTS: Through RMA's *Involvement in Member Legal Matters* policy, RMA provided financial support to Northern Sunrise County to appeal the court ruling referenced in this resolution. In 2019, the RMA provided additional information and support to assist the appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. As such, this resolution is assigned the status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 10-17F

Provincial Industry-led Methane Flaring Strategy

Status: Accepted in Principle

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties advocate to the Government of Alberta to permit an industry-led approach to a reduction in methane emissions.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA recognizes the significance of methane as a greenhouse gas and the need to reduce methane emissions. On January 1, 2020, the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction (TIER) system was introduced to manage emissions from large industries. TIER encourages industrial facilities to develop innovative approaches to reduce emissions and invest in clean technology to stay competitive. Methane and nitrous oxide (N₂O) emissions from either biomass combustion, fermentation or decomposition are included under TIER.

In addition, the Government of Alberta has reached a preliminary agreement with the Government of Canada over how methane emissions are regulated in the province and will achieve emissions reductions equivalent to the federal regulation by 2025. The preliminary equivalency deal required Alberta to make some changes to how methane emissions are measured and reported. This included lengthening the testing of gas production at heavy oil and crude bitumen batteries to 72 hours from 24 hours and remove exemptions for some forms of methane venting equipment. There has been no further information regarding what the Alberta framework will entail, but in a press conference on May 13, the Minister of Alberta Environment and Parks stated that large industries have consistently demonstrated that emissions reduction can be achieved through innovation and that the Government of Alberta will continue this approach. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Principle** and will monitor the progress of the TIER program and the methane reduction deal between the federal and Alberta government.

ENVIRONMENT

Resolution 4-19S

Bighorn Country Proposal Consultation

Status: Accepted in Principle

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that they will not be proceeding with the previous government's proposed plan for protected areas in Bighorn Country. The Minister of Environment and Parks has stated that residents, municipal officials and First Nations groups have raised concerns about how the proposal might affect oil and gas explorations and off-road vehicle use, and that economic and environmental concerns were not adequately answered through the initial consultation process. The Government of Alberta response indicates that future land use planning decisions will be dealt with through the North Saskatchewan regional planning process under the Land-use Framework. RMA appreciates that under the North Saskatchewan regional planning process, the government will consult with local residents, municipalities, Indigenous groups and other stakeholders to determine how best to manage the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan region. However, since the new consultation process has not begun, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Principle**, and will re-evaluate the resolution based on the progress of further consultation.

Resolution 5-19S

Amendments Required for Crown Land Recreation Disposition Applications and Renewals

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta's response indicates some recognition of the concerns that municipalities and not-for-profit organizations have shared regarding disposition applications and renewals. However, the intent of the resolution is not addressed through the creation of the Fish Creek Provincial Park pilot. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and the RMA will continue to work with the Government of Alberta to fulfill the intent of this resolution.

Resolution 9-19S

Watershed Planning and Advisory Council Funding

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: In the 2020 Budget, the Government of Alberta increased Water for Life funding to \$51 million dollars.

RMA is pleased by the commitment from Alberta Environment and Parks that they are working to further improve the grant application process, decision-making processes and to provide timely-status updates to applicants, however, the intent of the resolution is not addressed by the government's response. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to work with the Government of Alberta to fulfil the intent of this resolution and update members on the government's progress.

Resolution 11-19S

Update of the Provincial Code of Practice for Compost Facilities

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates the commitment from Alberta Environment and Parks to work with municipalities to resolve issues surrounding composting and compost facilities. However, the resolution requests the Government of Alberta to update the Code of Practice for Compost Facilities to reflect, at minimum, the Standards for Composting Facilities in Alberta.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to work with the Government of Alberta to fulfill the intent of this resolution.

Resolution 7-18F

Municipal and Privately-Owned Protected Areas Inventory

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) urge the Government of Alberta to recognize municipal and privately-owned protected areas in their reporting towards Alberta's 17% protection of terrestrial areas and inland waters target if they satisfy international standards for protected areas or Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs);

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA partner with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association to compile an inventory of all municipal and privately-owned protected areas in Alberta, for the purpose

of providing Alberta Environment and Parks with a complete inventory of candidate protected areas and OECMs, for their 2020 17% terrestrial areas and inland waters protection target.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA is encouraged by the Government of Alberta's recognition of the ecological and biodiversity benefits of municipal and privately-owned protected areas. RMA has been in contact with the Alberta Land Stewardship Centre which has an existing inventory of privately held conservation areas, but does not include municipally held land. In addition, RMA has reached out to the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI) to discuss what options are available to RMA to create a database of all municipal and privately-owned protected areas.

RMA has reached out to AUMA to discuss this resolution and to learn if this issue is a priority among its members. AUMA has informed RMA that its members have not passed a resolution seeking the creation of an inventory of municipal and privately-owned areas, and therefore the project would not be a priority for AUMA. RMA is continuing to determine how to proceed on this resolution and will update its members on any progress. The current status is **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 9-18F

Impact of the Alberta Wetland Policy on the Cost of Maintaining Public Road Infrastructure

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to modify the Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive to allow all wetland impacts as a result of municipal road maintenance or re-building of existing roads to utilize a one to one ratio, or D to D value wetland replacement; and/or consider exempting all wetland impacts in road right of ways that are smaller than one hectare in size.

DEVELOPMENTS: In January 2020, Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) conducted a survey to gather information from municipalities about municipal road maintenance activities impacting wetlands. AEP is seeking to reduce red tape and streamline the regulatory process for low-risk wetland impacts resulting from municipal road maintenance activities. AEP has not shared the results from this survey, nor indicated that policy changes to reduce municipal wetland restoration costs related to road maintenance or construction will be achieved through the use of a one-to-one replacement ratio or exemption of wetland impacts in road right of ways smaller than one hectare in size. RMA will continue to be in contact with AEP and will update its members on any changes. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 11-18F

Rural Municipalities of Alberta Represents Municipalities on *Water Act* Approvals

Status: Accepted in Principle

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta work with Alberta Environment and Parks to provide the rural perspective and input related to streamlining and improving the *Water Act* approval process.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) is in the process of enhancing the *Water Act* approval system to reduce approval

times for activities regulated under the *Water Act*. Alberta Environment and Parks has developed a draft code of practice on wetland restoration projects to reduce red tape and streamline the regulatory process. The draft code would restructure the risk management system by lifting the requirements on minor works orders and focusing regulation on high-risk projects. AEP is currently undertaking an engagement process through TalkAEP with RMA and other stakeholders to ensure that the draft code will meet the needs of those conducting wetland restorations.

In January 2020, AEP conducted a survey to gather information from municipalities about municipal road maintenance activities impacting wetlands. AEP is seeking to reduce red tape and streamline the regulatory process for low risk wetland impacts resulting from municipal road maintenance activities. AEP has not released the results from the survey, but RMA will continue to be in contact with AEP and will keep members informed on any updates.

The Minister of Environment and Parks is open to working together with RMA to provide the rural perspective and improving the current *Water Act* approval process, although it is not clear in what capacity. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Principle**. The resolution will be updated based on future collaboration between AEP and RMA on addressing *Water Act* approvals.

Resolution 15-18F

Wetland Mitigation Directive – Restoration and Compensation

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that Alberta Environment and Parks follow the Wetland Mitigation Directive and that permittee-responsible mitigation either through enhancement or construction of wetlands be allowed, be it either through the Alternative Land Use Services program or through wetlands constructed as a part of stormwater management ponds.

DEVELOPMENTS: Changes to the management of wetland replacement in Alberta allow for greater flexibility in how municipalities can work locally to replace disturbed wetlands. The Government of Alberta has created Alberta Guide to Wetland Construction in Stormwater Management Facilities, which provides guidance on wetland construction practices in stormwater management facilities based on scientific and practical knowledge and experience across Canada. This guide allows municipalities to apply wetlands constructed as part of a stormwater management system towards their wetland replacement obligations. As a result of the release of the guide, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 17-18F

Alberta Environment and Parks Additional Resources for *Water Act* Approvals

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to allocate sufficient financial resources to improve and streamline its *Water Act* approvals process and systems.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) is in the process of enhancing the *Water Act* approval system to reduce approval times for activities regulated under the *Water Act*. AEP has developed a draft code of practice on wetland restoration projects to reduce red tape and streamline the regulatory process by restructuring the risk management system by lifting the requirements on minor works orders and focusing on more regulation on high-risk projects. AEP is currently undertaking an engagement process through TalkAEP with RMA and other stakeholders to ensure that the draft code will meet the needs of those conducting wetland restorations.

In January 2020, AEP conducted a survey to gather information from municipalities about municipal road maintenance activities impacting wetlands. AEP is seeking to reduce red tape and streamline the regulatory process for low risk wetland impacts resulting from municipal road maintenance activities. AEP has not released the results from the survey, but RMA will continue to be in contact with AEP and will keep members informed on any updates.

The Minister has stated that these changes will help improve and streamline the Water Act approvals process and systems. Although new programs and systems are in the works, the impact of this new processes on approval times is not known. Until noticeable changes to approval times are realized, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and the RMA will continue to raise this issue with AEP.

Resolution 20-18F

Decommissioning Costs for Wind Energy Developments

Status: Accepted

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: The RMA has been involved in a number of consultation on the end-of-life management of renewable energy infrastructure in Alberta to ensure that, when the time for decommissioning occurs, that reclamation and remediation can occur in a timely and effective manner that will minimize future impacts to the land, neighbours, and land owners. In comparison to oil and gas activity, there are several differences between oil and gas and renewable energy which are related to the nature of the resource itself. Landowners have more control over the direct citing of renewable energy projects and have a great ability to request accountability for the end-of-life management if they are informed at the outset of a project. The RMA has developed, in partnership with the Miistakis Institute, a resource to inform municipalities of the renewable energy approval process.

Alberta Environment and Parks has amended the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation to include renewable energy operation as an activity requiring reclamation at end of life. Under the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation, security, such as cash, must be submitted by the operator to the Government of Alberta to account for reclamation costs. If an operator fails to comply with the Conservation and Reclamation Directive, then the security will be used for the reclamation at end of life for renewable resources. RMA assigns this resolution as **Accepted**.

Resolution 22-18F

Amendment to the Wildlife Regulations Regarding Cougars

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to amend section 7, subsection 3 of the *Wildlife Regulation* to provide the same hunting allowances for cougars on private land that already exist for wolves and black bears;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that section 7, subsection 8 of the *Wildlife Regulation*, which establishes separate hunting allowances for cougars on private land, be repealed;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that reporting a cougar kill remain as a requirement of the *Wildlife Regulation*.

DEVELOPMENTS: The response from the Government of Alberta indicates that there is not anticipated legislative or regulatory changes that impact the management of cougars and therefore, this status is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 8-18S

Amendments Required for Provincial Recycling Regulations

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to make the changes outlined under the 2013 proposed *Designated Materials Recycling Regulation*.

DEVELOPMENTS: Alberta Environment and Parks have announced a commitment to working with stakeholders, including RMA to enhance provincial recycling programs and an interest in shifting to an Extended Producer Responsibility System. RMA was a project partner on the Alberta Collaborative Extended Producer Responsibility Study (ACES) which outlines a made in Alberta vision for Extended Producer Responsibility. The report was distributed to the Minister of Environment and Parks, however, little information is currently known on the status of this review.

The Government of Alberta has approved a two-year electronics pilot project which could see an additional 24,600 tonnes of electronics diverted from landfills. The Alberta Recycling Management Authority (ARMA) is leading the project and is currently in the planning phase to develop the pilot framework that will include the procurement of external expertise to support planning, implementation and execution, stakeholder engagement and a communications program. The project is expected to start in August 2020. While the pilot is a positive development in improving Alberta's recycling practices, at this time, the majority of the recommendations linked to the *Designated Materials Recycling Regulation* are not implemented. RMA has assigned this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**.

RMA is active on the Agriculture Plastics Recycling Group (APRG) which was awarded \$1,000,000 to initiate a three-year agriculture plastics recycling program. RMA appreciates the Government

of Alberta's recognition of this important initiative and will continue to work with the government to see to it that a permanent solution to the end-of-life management of agriculture plastics can be found.

Resolution 9-18S

Exemption of Seniors Housing from Requirement to Pay Carbon Levy

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) urge the Government of Alberta to exempt housing management bodies from the provincial carbon levy;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA advocate to Alberta Seniors and Housing for additional capital funds to be accessed by housing management bodies to install more efficient infrastructure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in regulated housing facilities.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta passed *Bill 1, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax* and it received Royal Assent on June 4, 2019. The carbon levy no longer applies to any type of fuel. In response the federal government announced that it will implement a Carbon Tax on Alberta in January 2020. RMA will re-visit this resolution when the federal Carbon Tax is announced.

The Affordable Housing Energy Solutions program is closed and will not be scheduling new appointments. In partnership with the Ministry of Seniors and Housing, the Affordable Housing Energy Solutions program was created to improve energy efficiency, reduce energy use and increase comfort for those with low incomes, including seniors. This fulfils the second request of the resolution, however, the program does not state when, if ever, the application process will re-open. This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part**.

Resolution 11-18S

Recycling of Solar Panels

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that the Government of Alberta expand existing recycling programs to include solar panels (photovoltaic modules).

DEVELOPMENTS: The majority of solar panels operate with a 25- to 30-year lifespan, and many of the systems installed since solar energy became financially viable are still in operation. This has meant that the recycling of solar panels has not yet become a widespread concern. However, there will be a time in the near future when an economic and pragmatic approach to solar panel recycling is needed.

RMA is interested in seeing proper end-of-life management programs developed for a wide range of materials used commonly in the province, including solar panels. RMA is awaiting a review of Alberta's recycling program, and hopes that solar panel recycling will be considered within that review. At the current time, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 2-17F

Completion of Alberta's Land-use Framework Prior to Establishment of Conservation and Protected Areas for Species at Risk

Status: Accepted in Principle

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties requests that no additional conservation or protected areas be established, proposed or expanded in Alberta prior to the implementation of the remaining regional land-use plans.

DEVELOPMENTS: The regional planning process under the Land-use Framework has been slowed considerably and Alberta remains without regional plans in areas of significant future development. The lack of regional plans creates challenges when the Government of Alberta has moved forward with the protection or conservation of land without the context of the regional plans.

As noted in the response from the Government of Alberta, the Government of Canada has mandated the creation of caribou range plans – a process which is complicated by the lack of a regional plan in north western Alberta. This process has involved numerous consultations and recently, in March 2018, the Government of Alberta suspended the creation of caribou protection plans and requested additional assistance from the Government of Canada to identify the socio-economic impacts of such plans.

This resolution speaks directly to the concerns of rural municipalities and the creation of conservation areas to protect caribou. Since the province has suspended this process in favour of a greater understanding of the impacts that future restrictions on development may have on local communities, this resolution is assigned a status **Accepted in Principle**. However, RMA is monitoring the proposed designation of several provincial parks and wildland parks in the Bighorn region, and how they may impact the expansion of protected areas.

The Government of Alberta has indicated that they will not be proceeding with the previous government's proposed plan for protected areas in Bighorn Country. The Minister of Environment and Parks has stated residents, municipal officials and First Nations groups have raised concerns about how the proposal might affect oil and gas exploration and off-road vehicle use, and there were a lot of economic and environmental concerns that were not answered through the consultation process. The Government of Alberta has shifted future land use planning decisions to the North Saskatchewan regional planning process under the Land-use Framework. RMA appreciates that under the North Saskatchewan regional planning process, the government will consult with local residents, municipalities Indigenous groups and other stakeholders to determine how best to manage the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan region. The consultation process has not yet commenced, and the resolution will be revisited based on how the proposal proceeds.

Resolution 3-17F

Municipal Action on Caribou Recovery Planning

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties proactively lead inter-jurisdictional municipal level caribou population recovery planning across Western Canada.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA has not undertaken inter-jurisdictional municipal level caribou population recovery across western Canada. RMA has, however, advocated member concerns on this issue and in March 2018, the Government of Alberta suspended the creation of caribou protection plans and requested additional assistance from the Government of Canada to identify the socio-economic impacts of such plans.

Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) has assembled three caribou sub-regional task forces that will advise the government on land-use planning at a local scale, including caribou recovery actions. The task forces include RMA representation along with relevant stakeholders. The task forces are intended to provide recommendations to the government on draft sub-regional plans for Cold Lake, Bistcho Lake and Upper Smoky. AEP are focused on creating sub-regional plans that fit within local and regional economies. RMA's involvement on the task forces is an important step to bring forward member concerns surrounding the socio-economic impacts that would result from loss of activity and sterilization of large tracts of land from caribou conservation. Although, it has not been determined whether the information from these task forces will be used on an inter-jurisdictional level, it may lead to that opportunity.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 4-17F

Water Act Approvals for Municipal Projects on Municipal Land

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties urge the Government of Alberta to relax the requirement for formal approvals on all road construction on municipal right of ways less than 40 metres wide and consider alternate strategies for protecting water resources.

DEVELOPMENTS: In January 2020, Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) conducted a survey to gather information from municipalities about municipal road maintenance activities impacting wetlands. AEP is seeking to reduce red tape and streamline the regulatory process for low risk wetland impacts resulting from municipal road maintenance activities. AEP has not released the results from the survey, but RMA will continue to be in contact with AEP and will keep members informed on any updates. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** but will review the status once it is clear if the results of the survey will relax the requirement for formal approvals on all road construction on municipal right of ways less than 40 meters wide.

HEALTH AND SENIORS

Resolution 12-19S

Making Children's Healthcare a Priority in Alberta

Status: Accepted in Part

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Alberta Health response affirms ongoing support for the Stollery Children's Hospital, including new funding for a pediatric intensive care unit. Their response also highlights increased funding for mental health services in rural areas including child psychiatry. This additional funding for children's mental health care is welcome; RMA will continue to monitor how these services will be accessed by rural Albertans. The Alberta Health response closes by outlining existing children's healthcare services available through the Primary Care Network, which has offices in rural Alberta, however 16 of the 41 offices are in the Edmonton or Calgary regions. RMA assigns this resolution the status of **Accepted in Part**, and will continue to advocate for access to children's healthcare in rural Alberta.

Resolution 8-18F

Restricting the Consumption of Cannabis based on Regulations for Liquor Consumption

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta amend Section 90.28 (a) of *An Act to Control and Regulate Cannabis* to reflect that no person may smoke or vape cannabis in any area or place where that person is prohibited from consuming liquor under the *Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act* or any other Act or the bylaws of a municipality.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA understands that public consumption challenges differ between cannabis and alcohol due to the different ways the substances are consumed. However, several provinces and territories in Canada have chosen to prohibit public consumption of cannabis. RMA encourages Alberta to review the public health and enforcement impacts of its current public consumption allowances and compare them with impacts in jurisdictions that prohibit public consumption periodically.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to advocate on this issue.

Resolution 14-17F
Cannabis Act

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties advocate that the Government of Alberta oppose the legalization of cannabis for recreational use in the Province of Alberta until a complete understanding of the implications that the legalization of cannabis will have on the health of individuals and on community safety is publicly available.

DEVELOPMENTS: While RMA appreciates that the Government of Alberta has conducted extensive public engagement, with input from health, law enforcement and other subject area experts to understand the impacts of cannabis legalization, the fact remains that there are significant gaps in academic, government and industry research efforts related to the impacts of legalized cannabis on public health and community safety. RMA acknowledges that there is a stark difference between understanding concerns from stakeholders and understanding actual implications gleaned from empirical research in communities in which cannabis is legalized. RMA recognizes that this issue is not well researched, however, staff have been actively assisting municipalities in adapting to these changes by providing workshops and information as it becomes available. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**. RMA will continue to advocate that the Government of Alberta lead social and health impact assessments as information becomes available.

INDUSTRY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Resolution ER1-17F

Support for Trans Mountain Expansion Project

Status: Accepted

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 reach 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.

As of August 31, 2018, the Government of Canada purchased the Trans Mountain Expansion Project, demonstrating commitment to completing the project. On June 18, 2019, the Government of Canada announced that construction of the pipeline was approved with 156 conditions to be enforced by the Canada Energy Regulator (CER). The CER replaced the NEB. Construction began in Alberta in December 2019. In February 2020 the Federal Court of Appeal rejected a claim put forward by several First Nations that federal officials failed to adequately consult with them on the Trans Mountain Pipeline. In January 2020, the Supreme Court of Canada also ruled against a bid from the Government of British Columbia to block the project, determining that the project was legitimate.

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, and the Government of Canada has approved the project, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

Resolution 8-19S

Reinstatement of the Municipal Officer's Expense Allowance

Status: Accepted

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM) response indicates that they have categorized the resolution as "Category D." According to *FCM Procedures for Resolutions*, Category D resolutions are defined as follows:

this category contains resolutions on issues dealt with by FCM in the previous three (3) years or that are in accordance with FCM's standing policy and advocacy priorities. These resolutions will be received by the Board of Directors for information only. FCM staff is authorized to inform a sponsoring local government or affiliate member that its resolution will be categorized as "D".

Based on this categorization, FCM is already advocating for the return of the municipal officer's expense allowance. RMA is aware of a guide developed by FCM titled *Change in "One-Third" Federal Tax Exemption for Elected Officials: A Guide for Canadian Municipalities* that is intended to support municipalities in understanding the implications of the change and considering various options for addressing the elimination of the exemption, including increasing elected official salaries and expanding expense policies.

RMA is also aware of a response that the federal Minister of Finance provided to FCM on this issue, which stated the following:

Government took steps to bring the tax treatment of non-accountable allowances to municipal office holders in line with that afforded to other employees. An employer may reimburse work-related expenses on a tax-free basis, but non-accountable allowances may substitute for salary and are thus taxable.

The letter also indicated that the federal government was not planning to reconsider its decision on the issue. Although the finality of the federal decision is disappointing, the letter provides confirmation that FCM has advocated on this issue, which is the intent of the resolution. Therefore, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 2-18F

Annual Release Date of Assessment Year Modifiers

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to set the annual date of release of assessment year modifiers at September 15th or the nearest business day afterwards to allow municipalities to be properly informed when making budget decisions.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that due to requirements within the *Municipal Government Act* requiring assessed values to be based on a July 1 date, the process of gathering and analyzing assessment data and developing the annual assessment year modifier (AYM) cannot be significantly changed. RMA understands the impact of these regulatory requirements.

RMA has followed up with Alberta Municipal Affairs to discuss the possibility of amending the *Matters Relating to Assessment And Taxation Regulation* to change the July 1 estimate date to allow the finalized AYM to be shared with municipalities at a date that better aligns with the municipal budget cycle. Alberta Municipal Affairs staff appeared open to considering this change, but no formal action has taken place to date.

Municipalities continue to face uncertainty regarding AYM and industrial property assessment in general due to the ongoing assessment model review. Changes to the assessment model, which include AYM, are expected to be implemented for the 2021 tax year, but there has been no consideration within the assessment model review process of requiring a specific date for AYM to be released.

Additionally, as this resolution was partly necessitated due to the unexpected freezing of AYM in late 2017 after draft AYM were shared earlier in the year with no indication of a possible freeze, Alberta Municipal Affairs should enact a policy or internal requirement that final AYM can differ by no more than a set percentage from draft AYM, to allow municipalities with some assurance when drafting budgets prior to receiving final AYM.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**, and will work with Alberta Municipal Affairs to develop possible solutions.

Resolution 6-18F

Securing Municipal Property Taxes in the Event of Bankruptcy or Insolvency

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta partner with Alberta Urban Municipalities Association to advocate to the Government of Alberta to amend section 348 and other relevant sections of the *Municipal Government Act* to ensure that municipal property taxes are legally assured a status as a secured claim in the event that the property owner enters bankruptcy or receivership.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates the recent actions taken by the Government of Alberta to alleviate the ongoing challenges that rural municipalities are facing regarding the collection of

unpaid property taxes on linear properties. However, both the Provincial Education Requisition Credit (PERC) Program and allowing municipalities to place a \$0 assessment on linear properties owned by defunct companies are relatively small measures that attempt to alleviate the negative impacts that an unclear tax recovery regime has on rural municipalities.

Although these measures are appreciated, they come nowhere close to addressing the fundamental issue of a lack of tools for municipalities to address tax recovery from bankrupt companies. According to a January 2020 RMA member survey, rural municipalities are facing approximately \$173 million in unpaid property taxes from oil and gas companies, many of which are bankrupt.

In September 2019, the Supreme Court of Canada denied the application brought forward by three Alberta rural municipalities related to the Alberta Court of Appeal decision in *Northern Sunrise County v Virginia Hills Oil Corp*, 2019 ABCA 61. The denial confirms that the *Municipal Government Act* does not grant a municipality a special lien for unpaid linear property taxes. The decision confirms that municipalities cannot use s. 348 to seize linear property for unpaid taxes, severely limiting their tax recovery tools. The decision heightens the urgency for action on amending the MGA to ensure municipalities have tax enforcement and recovery powers.

It should also be noted that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Alberta moved quickly to allow for a deferral of the education portion of all non-residential property taxes until October 1 in an effort to assist businesses with short-term liquidity issues. Rather than pay a portion of the education tax requisition to the Government of Alberta quarterly, municipal requisition deadlines were delayed until December 31, 2020 (50%) and March 31, 2021 (50%). However, the deferral program does not address the likelihood that many businesses may become insolvent due to the pandemic, and many others may not be in a financial position to pay property taxes as of October 1, 2020. For municipalities, this will likely exacerbate the unpaid tax issue as the province will require education requisition amounts to be paid by municipalities by the dates above, with no backstop in place in the event municipalities are unable to collect this from business owners. RMA requested an expansion of PERC, or the creation of a similar program to support municipalities facing this situation. After initially committing to “explore” the idea, the Government of Alberta has indicated they will not implement a municipal support program for COVID-19-related unpaid taxes.

As the Government of Alberta has not amended section 348, including through recent omnibus bills that made significant changes to many sections of the MGA, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to advocate on this issue moving forward.

Resolution 1-18S

Request for Implementation of the 2018 Assessment Year Modifier for Well and Pipeline Assessments

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) lobby the Government of Alberta to immediately implement the 2018 assessment year modifier to well and pipeline assessments as identified in the draft calculation.

DEVELOPMENTS: The freezing of assessment year modifiers (AYMs) at 2017 levels caused significant frustration for RMA members, many of whom had prepared budgets based on draft AYM projections that the Government of Alberta had shared with municipalities prior to the freeze. In early 2019, Alberta Municipal Affairs informed RMA that the AYM process was being reviewed as part of a larger assessment model review that also includes updating construction costs for machinery and equipment and pipeline properties and depreciation measures. The review is expected to conclude in the spring of 2020 with changes implemented in the 2021 tax year.

While RMA and its members recognize the importance of having an improved process that is reflective of local costs and assessment variables, it is not clear what the result of this review will be, and why it was necessary to freeze 2018 AYM with no warning to accommodate the review. As assessment is critical to municipal viability, the municipal voice must be properly represented during future reviews. The Government of Alberta's continued freeze of the AYM means that this resolution is assigned the status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 1-17F

Centralization of Industrial Properties Assessment

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties request Alberta Municipal Affairs to delay implementation of the centralization of industrial property assessment until such time as Ministry personnel can procure the appropriate resources to develop valuation standards, regulated assessment rates, undertake and complete impact studies, communicate and collaborate with municipalities so the identified risks to their primary revenue structure can be mitigated throughout the transition and beyond.

DEVELOPMENTS: The centralization of industrial assessment was a significant shift to the *Municipal Government Act* under the most recent review. This change has the potential to disrupt municipal assessment operations and remove established local knowledge of facilities within municipalities. The resolution requests a delay in the implementation of the centralization until "Ministry personnel can procure the appropriate resources to develop valuation standards, regulated assessment rates, undertake and complete impact studies, communicate and collaborate with municipalities."

Since Alberta Municipal Affairs assumed their new responsibilities as of January 2018 and there was no delay, this resolution's intent has not been fulfilled. On January 1, 2018, the Government of Alberta began a phased transition to centralized assessment by providing direct assessment of some designated industrial properties while temporarily contracting municipalities to provide the remaining assessments. In July 2019, the Government of Alberta centralized an additional portion

of the remaining contracted assessment work, and transition to a fully centralized system is expected to be complete in 2021.

RMA has engaged in recent discussions with other municipal and industry stakeholder organizations who are dissatisfied with the centralization process. Following the completion of the assessment model review, there may be an opportunity to engage the Government of Alberta in re-considering centralization and evaluating alternatives such as returning responsibility for industrial assessment to municipal assessors, or in establishing an arms-length assessment body for industrial property assessment. This approach is used for all properties in British Columbia (B.C. Assessment), Ontario (Municipal Property Assessment Corporation), and Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency). A similar approach to industrial property could be considered in Alberta.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Resolution 18-18F

Utility Conflict in Municipal Right of Ways

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta collaborate with the Government of Alberta and other stakeholders to create a better process of locating and marking utilities to alleviate the added costs and delays being incurred by municipalities conducting infrastructure maintenance or construction; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that options considered in this process include:

- negotiate with utility companies to ensure they honor their schedules or be held responsible to pay for all delays, impacts and costs associated with these delays; and
- create a universal master agreement for utility companies to enter into with all municipalities whereby utility companies pay a fee per lineal meter for their utilities to be located within municipal road right of way.

DEVELOPMENTS: The response provided by the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) indicates the unique challenges related to the utility right of way approval process. The first part of this resolution requests an improvement to the utility marking and locating process to reduce delays and costs. The AUC response explains the current process but does not indicate plans to improve it. Not mentioned in the response but relevant to the resolution is the introduction of Bill 211: *Alberta Underground Infrastructure Notification System Consultation Act* in the Alberta Legislature in early 2019. Bill 211 would form a committee of the Legislative Assembly to prepare and submit a “report on the underground infrastructure notification system in Alberta, which must include any recommendations for amendments to legislation to improve safety for excavators and to protect underground infrastructure.” Among other things, the report must consider “enforcement of rules pertaining to the underground infrastructure notification system.” RMA formally supported the passing of Bill 211. Bill 211 received first reading in March 2019. Unfortunately, due to the provincial election in April 2019, the Bill did not proceed to second reading or receive royal assent. In May 2020, RMA submitted a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs requesting the re-introduction of Bill 211 or similar legislation to support ground disturbance notification requirements.

The second part of this resolution requests the development of a master agreement which would include a fee per lineal metre to be paid by utility companies with infrastructure within a municipality’s boundaries. The AUC response raises concerns about the costs such an approach would impose on utility companies, which would be passed along to consumers. RMA looks forward to discussing this approach and its pros and cons with the AUC. At this point, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, but RMA looks forward to progressing on this issue through Bill 211 and other discussions with the AUC.

Resolution 7-18S

Standards for Property Contaminated by Fentanyl and Carfentanil

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request the Government of Alberta to establish defined standards and consistent regulated approaches for inspecting property contaminated by fentanyl or carfentanil.

DEVELOPMENTS: In May 2020, the Government of Alberta released *Fentanyl Remediation: Guidance for Remediators, Regulatory Agencies and Professionals*. The document is intended to assist organizations in managing risks related to inspecting and remediation properties and materials contaminated by fentanyl. This guide is meant for municipalities, law enforcement, environmental health inspectors, companies owning or operating real estate, and the construction and remediation sectors. The guide provides an overview of site assessments, remediation work procedures, and post-remediation assessment. It also provides guidance related to selecting a remediation contractor, the use of personal protective equipment, and other technical aspects of the remediation process.

While the guide is an important step in supporting municipalities and other organizations in safely inspecting and remediating fentanyl-contaminated properties, the resolution requests a *regulated* approach to contaminated property inspections, and the guidelines are not mandatory. As a result, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part**.

Resolution 19-17F

Builder Licensing Program Impacts

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) request that the Government of Alberta delay the implementation of the Builder Licensing Program until such time it can reasonably demonstrate that the impacts of such a program will yield a positive impact on the residential construction industry and its participants;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the AAMDC request that the Government of Alberta recognize and resolve the negative impacts of the *New Home Buyers Protection Act* on rural Alberta tradesmen, municipalities, and home owners.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates a positive reception to the builder licensing program and clarifies that the program does not directly apply to trades involved in residential construction. The resolution requests that the builder licensing program be delayed until “it can reasonably demonstrate that the impacts of such a program will yield a positive impact on the residential construction industry and its participants”. Given that it is unclear whether a “positive impact” is resulting from the existing program, and it is implied in the resolution that the initial program was not having a positive impact, RMA assumes that

continuing the program in its current format does not meet the intent of this resolution. Additionally, the government response does not include reference to the *New Home Buyers Protection Act*.

The United Conservative Party's (UCP) policy platform included a commitment to "reduce red tape burdens on home builders to lower the regulatory cost that has increased the price of new housing." As the UCP was elected as Alberta's government earlier in 2019, they will presumably take action to meet this platform commitment. The commitment does not specifically reference changes to the Builder Licensing Program, and to this point, no changes have been made to the program by the UCP government. However, RMA will continue to monitor government action on this platform commitment and whether it may impact the program.

This resolution has been assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will monitor the Government of Alberta's actions in reducing the regulatory burden on new home builders.

POLICING AND RURAL CRIME

Resolution 2-18S

Combatting Rural Crime

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta develop and implement strategies and initiatives to prevent and combat rural crime, and punish those convicted of committing rural crime in a manner that will maximize deterrence;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA, through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, request the Government of Canada to continue with its review of the criminal justice system and sentencing reforms in a way that gets repeat offenders off the street for longer periods of time.

DEVELOPMENTS: In March 2018, the Government of Alberta implemented a Rural Crime Action Plan intended to reduce rural crime by better focusing resources in rural areas and prioritizing a proactive and strategic approach to addressing rural crime. The Action Plan included the following seven points:

- Crime reduction units: Specially trained officers will focus on arresting prolific offenders. This initiative will expand on a successful pilot project in Central Alberta.
- Specialized police intelligence: Six additional intelligence-focused RCMP officers plus four crime analyst positions will allow the RCMP to identify prolific offenders and target organized crime.
- Policing support centre: RCMP officers need to be on the streets protecting our communities, not behind a desk filling out paperwork. Twenty-three civilians will input investigative updates dictated over the phone by officers.
- More Crown prosecutors: \$2 million will allow the Alberta Crown Prosecution Service to hire up to 10 Crown prosecutors who will focus solely on rural crime.
- Better coordination: Sharing information with Alberta sheriffs, Fish and Wildlife Enforcement, Commercial Vehicle Enforcement and conservation officers will effectively make these officials additional “eyes and ears” for police.
- Enhanced technology: The RCMP will work with Alberta Justice and Solicitor General and other partners to explore new ways of using technology to target rural crime, including bait programs.
- Public education and engagement: The RCMP will engage and educate Albertans about crime prevention.

The Action Plan was supported by a \$10 million investment from the Government of Alberta.

In September 2018, the Government of Alberta and Royal Canadian Mounted Police jointly announced an 11% decrease in property crimes in rural Alberta detachments between January

and July 2018 – a reduction that is at least partly linked by the Government of Alberta to the initiatives in the Action Plan.

In February 2019, the Government of Alberta announced the next phase of the Action Plan, called “Project Lock-Up,” which will focus on collaboration between police and other enforcement organizations such as community peace officer, sheriffs, fish and wildlife officers, and others to increase patrols in “hard hit” rural areas, enhance victim support and communication, provide residents of “hard hit” areas with trace pens to increase the likelihood of recovering stolen property, and further enhance investigative response in high priority areas.

In spring 2019, the newly-elected UCP government announced a rural crime strategy based on their 2018 report titled *A Safer Alberta: United Conservative Strategy to Tackle the Rural Crime Crisis*. In fall 2019, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General Doug Schweitzer undertook a province-wide townhall tour to gather information to support the further development of a plan. Additionally, in November 2019, the Government of Alberta announced several more initiatives to address rural crime, including the expansion of the role of approximately 400 peace officers to respond to a wider range of calls and better support the RCMP, a strengthening of property rights through changes to the *Occupiers’ Liability Act*, an increase in enforcement and preventative measures related to metal theft, and the allowance of “community impact statements” in trials related to rural crime.

RMA is pleased with the Action Plan and the early positive indicators of its effectiveness in decreasing rural crime, as well as the initiatives taken to date by the UCP government, and will advocate for the Government of Alberta to make a long-term funding commitment to sustain or expand the initial Action Plan.

RMA is concerned that the new police costing model implemented by the Government of Alberta in early 2020 may not be effective in addressing rural crime. It remains unclear how the model will increase local policing capacity, and whether benefits will be distributed equally across the province. In some cases, the increased policing costs that municipalities are required to pay may reduce protective services in the form of peace officers, bylaw officers, and social service provision that helps to prevent crime. RMA is hopeful that the newly formed Alberta Police Advisory Board will contribute to establishing a link between the increased policing costs borne by municipalities and enhanced service across rural Alberta.

RMA also forwarded this resolution to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) as per the second operative clause. FCM reviewed the resolution and categorized it as “issues not within municipal and/or federal jurisdiction,” meaning it is not within the scope of FCM’s mandate, mainly because a request to advocate for “sentencing reforms in a way that gets repeat offenders off the street for longer periods of time” is not a specific municipal issue, although it would indirectly support municipalities by helping to address rural crime. RMA is disappointed with this response but will continue to work with FCM to share the rural Alberta perspective on issues related to crime and justice.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Part**, and will continue to advocate on this issue at the provincial level and to the FCM.

Resolution 3-18S

Increase Crown Prosecutor Staffing Levels for Rural Municipalities

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) encourage the Government of Alberta to increase Crown prosecutor staffing levels as well as relevant administrative staff for rural municipalities and collaborate with rural municipalities to ensure that court cases are being sufficiently prosecuted in a timely manner.

DEVELOPMENTS: As indicated in the Government of Alberta response, two million dollars has been allocated under the Rural Crime Action Plan to hire up to ten Crown prosecutors to focus on rural crime. RMA is pleased with this commitment as well as the Government of Alberta's swiftness in hiring eight of ten prosecutors to this point.

The UCP government built on this commitment in their pre-election platform by committing to spending \$10 million per year over the next four years to hire an additional 50 prosecutors. This initiative was supported in the 2019 provincial budget. Additionally, in November 2019, the Government of Alberta announced a plan to double the number of articling students hired by the Crown prosecution service from eight to 16, with an increase to at least 20 by 2021. According to Minister of Justice and Solicitor General Doug Schweitzer, the increase in articling students is in addition to the commitment to hire an additional 50 Crown prosecutors, and that the students will be prioritized for placement in rural Alberta.

Alberta's 2020 provincial budget included a reiteration of the commitment to hire an additional 50 prosecutors over the next three years, at an additional cost of \$10 million annually. However, the actual financial commitments for the Crown prosecutor service in the 2020 budget reflect a decrease of approximately 10% from the amount indicated in the province's 2019 budget (\$340 million decreased to \$306.7 million). Additionally, according to the Alberta Crown Attorney's Association, Alberta currently has 33 unfilled Crown prosecutor positions. Given the currently unfilled positions combined with the planned reduction in funding for the Crown prosecution service, RMA is concerned that the Government of Alberta may be unable to fulfill their commitment of hiring 50 new Crown prosecutors.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and will be reviewed based on actual hiring of additional Crown prosecutors and their deployment in rural Alberta.

Resolution 12-18S

Victim Services Units Funding

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) lobby the Government of Alberta to use the monies from the Victims of Crime Fund to adequately fund provincial victim services units so they can provide the staffing levels required to assist victims of crime.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates action to divert greater amounts from the Victims of Crime Fund to support victim services units. More specifically, the Government of Alberta has increased the maximum annual funding that victim services units in Alberta's large urban centers can access, as maximum amounts will increase from \$300,000 to \$500,000 in Edmonton and Calgary, and from \$150,000 to \$300,000 in Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (which had already been temporarily increased to \$265,000 due to wildfires in 2016). While this is a positive development, the maximum annual funding amount for all other victim services units appears to have remained at \$150,000. As some rural areas in Alberta are experiencing extremely high crime rates, and victim services unit funding is based on an allocation formula that takes into consideration local crime rates, RMA believes that the maximum potential annual funding amount should be increased for all victim services units to allow for consistent access to funding across the province, as crime rates do not necessarily align with population.

In December 2019, the Government of Alberta undertook a consultation on the replacement of the Victims of Crime Financial Benefits Program (VCFBP) with a new "Alberta Victim Assistance" program, which is intended to replace the financial support focus of the VCFBP with a program that is more service-oriented and effectively meets the needs of victims who may experience challenges in accessing legal, emotional, or other support services, including those in rural areas. RMA is awaiting the results of the review.

In June 2020, the Government of Alberta introduced Bill 16, *Victims of Crime (Strengthening Public Safety) Amendment Act*. As of the writing of this response, Bill 16 is currently in second reading in the legislature. One change proposed through Bill 16 is to expand potential uses of the Victims of Crime Fund beyond programs and initiatives that support victims of crime to also include programs and initiatives that promote public safety. There is a significant risk that should Bill 16 pass, funding from the Victims of Crime Fund may be diverted from victims services units to support broader policing and public safety initiatives unrelated to victim support. The Alberta Police Based Victim Service Association issued the following statement concerning Bill 16:

Amendments to the Act [through Bill 16] will see the tearing down of the fundamental principles entrenched in the original *Victims of Crime Act* created in 1990.

The original Act collected a surcharge on fines assessed for various offences in Alberta, therefore, these are not tax dollars. Those funds were intended to support victim serving organizations in providing services direct to those who have suffered as victims of crime

and or tragedy. The money supports a cohort of volunteers in every corner of Alberta to be there in times of crisis to support and assist when tragedy strikes.

Frugal use of those funds by community organized police based organizations results today in a \$74M surplus. The surplus guarantees sustainable support for victims for many years and therefore no reliance on tax dollars, an achievement like none other in Canada. If this legislation is successful, the Solicitor General will arbitrarily have unfettered access to the fund to provide more police, more prosecutors and fund other undefined public safety initiatives. This amounts to a raid on a fund that for 30 years has carefully and prudently provided a safe landing for those criminally and brutally treated.

[...]

The Association is disturbed with the direction taken by this Minister in this legislation. Victims are central in the criminal justice system, a ploy such as this does a great disservice to them, and those dedicated to supporting them. Association members have already felt impacts of victim funds being redirected for public safety initiatives as requests for operating funds have been reduced and training dollars all but eliminated.

This is the wrong move for this province. Funds need to first address the needs of victim services while any expanded use be judiciously considered after consultations with the victim serving community.

Although still awaiting the results of the 2019 consultation on the replacement of the Victims of Crime Financial Benefits Program (VCFBP) with a new “Alberta Victim Assistance” program, RMA is concerned with the impacts that Bill 16 may have on victim services unit funding. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**, and will continue to advocate on this issue.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Resolution 3-19S

Light Weight Concrete Bridge Girders

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response provides a summary of why legal action was not pursued. Alberta Transportation identifies the resources they developed and shared with affected municipalities to mitigate the effects of the deteriorating girders. Finally, Alberta Transportation confirms that there is no additional funding for the repair or replacement of the municipal SC girder bridges. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to monitor resources available to municipalities to address the SC girder bridges.

Resolution 1-18F

Provincial Contribution to Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to provide additional funding to municipalities for the provincial contribution of Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program funding.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that due to fiscal restraints additional funding is not available to support municipalities in leveraging funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) beyond the use of existing provincial grants that support the same project types as those eligible under ICIP.

RMA appreciates the fiscal challenges facing the Government of Alberta and the challenges that federal cost-share requirements can have on provincial budgets. However, ICIP presents a unique opportunity to leverage federal funding to cover a significant portion of the costs of infrastructure projects that would otherwise be entirely a municipal or provincial (through grant funding) responsibility. Additionally, Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) funding is intended to support long-term municipal capital planning and expecting municipalities to redirect that funding to apply to ICIP-supported projects contradicts the emphasis that the Government of Alberta has placed on long-term planning in recent years.

RMA appreciates that, as identified in Alberta Infrastructure’s response, ICIP’s Community, Culture, and Recreation stream, which is most likely to require municipalities to use funds to meet provincial cost-share requirements, is already significantly oversubscribed. However, this is not an indicator that the provincial cost-share contribution is meeting the needs of most municipalities in the province, but rather that many of Alberta’s municipalities are so in need of infrastructure funding that they are willing to divert previously planned MSI funding to pursue ICIP-supported projects.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will advocate for the more strategic leveraging of provincial funding in future federal grant programs.

OTHER

Resolution 10-19S

Strategic Direction for the RMA

Status: Accepted

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 23-18F

Social Well-Being of An Employee and Domestic Violence – Occupational Health and Safety Act

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta define what is meant by “social well-being” of an employee within the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and the responsibilities of an employer with regard to “domestic violence or suspicion of domestic violence” within the OHSA.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that although “social well-being” is now included in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA), it is not specifically defined. As monitoring and identifying risks to social well-being can often be much more difficult than physical aspects of health and safety, employers (including municipalities) may face significant difficulties in balancing the need to be aware of situations which may compromise social well-being with the need to respect the privacy of their employees, even within the workplace. For employers to effectively monitor the social well-being of their employees, further guidance is needed from the Government of Alberta.

The Government of Alberta response is effective in clarifying how domestic violence is linked to the workplace and employer. Clarifying that this is a valid consideration in health and safety planning will help to support safe workplaces. However, like the comment above, guidance on how municipalities can appropriately monitor their workplace for risks of domestic violence without infringing on employee property would be appreciated.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Part**, and will continue to advocate on greater clarity around defining “social well-being.”

Resolution 5-18S

Provincial Government Consultation and Communication Protocol with Municipalities

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) appeal to the Government of Alberta to establish and maintain a uniform consultation and communication protocol with municipal elected officials which is applicable to all provincial bodies;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that through this consultation and communication protocol, the Government of Alberta recognizes and acknowledges the legislated significance of municipal elected officials, and that the Government of Alberta engage municipalities openly and transparently to provide input and feedback on the consultation and communication protocol from inception through to implementation.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates the effort that Alberta Municipal Affairs have demonstrated in involving RMA and its members in consultations related to the *Municipal Government Act* review. However, the resolution requests a uniform approach to gathering direct input from municipal elected officials on issues that impact municipalities, regardless of ministry. In endorsing this resolution, RMA members have indicated that the quality of consultation varies widely, and a consistent approach is needed to ensure the municipal voice is consistently heard.

More recently, RMA has experienced several cases in which government officials leading consultations or changes to legislation and policy in certain areas were unaware of changes underway in other areas of government that, when combined, would have a cumulative impact on municipalities.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to work with the Government of Alberta to improve the consultation process with municipalities.

Resolution 9-17F

AAMDC Refusal to Engage in Exploratory Discussion to Merge with AUMA

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) refuse to enter into any discussions with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) that would result in any attempt to merge the AAMDC with AUMA.

DEVELOPMENTS: The AUMA is a valued partner for RMA, and collaborating to create a unified municipal voice on issues of mutual importance is an effective advocacy approach. However, RMA respects its members' direction that an independent rural municipal voice is needed in Alberta, and is committed to continuing to serve that role. This resolution is deemed **Accepted**.

Resolution 13-17F

AAMDC Advisory Committee to Support the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission in Reviewing Charitable Gaming in Alberta

Status: Accepted

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties establish an advisory committee with a mandate to provide a rural perspective in support of the efforts of the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission's commitment in moving forward with changes in the charitable gaming funding to treat all organizations equally across the province.

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA recruited members and initiated the committee in spring 2018. Since then, the committee has met several times. In December 2018, the committee finalized their report and recommendations, which were endorsed by the RMA Board of Directors. The committee also presented their findings to members at the Spring 2019 convention.

The Government of Alberta began a review of the charitable gaming model in early 2019, which was postponed indefinitely due to the provincial election. RMA is advocating to the Government of Alberta for a resumption of the review. If the review resumes, RMA will re-share the committee's recommendations with rural municipalities and charitable organizations to support their participation. This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 15-17F

Stopping the Implementation of Proposed Federal Tax Reforms

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties urge the Government of Canada not to proceed with the proposed federal tax reforms that will negatively impact small to medium enterprises and the agricultural sector.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Canada response indicates that several proposed tax reforms will not be implemented due to concerns expressed by RMA and other stakeholders across Canada. In particular, the response highlights the decision to not proceed with proposed measures to address the multiplication of the lifetime capital gains exemption due to the potential impacts on intergenerational transfers of family businesses, including farms.

The Government of Canada will also not implement changes related to the conversion of income into capital gains due to their potential unintended impacts on small businesses and farms. Additionally, the government of Canada plans to consult farmers, fishers, and other business owners on how to better accommodate intergenerational transfers of businesses while protecting the fairness of the tax system.

While RMA is pleased with the Government of Canada's willingness to re-evaluate these proposed changes, it should be noted that other proposed changes, such as those to address passive investment and its use by high income individuals will persist. For example, changes to passive income requirements for small businesses that will result in the accumulation of more than \$50,000 in passive income subjecting some business earnings to a higher tax rate was implemented on January 1, 2019. As resolution 15-17F is very broad in its direction that all

proposed federal tax reforms not be implemented, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Part**, and appreciates the Government of Canada's willingness to re-evaluate and not proceed on several aspects of their initial proposal.

Resolution ER3-17F

Effective Representation for Rural Albertans in Alberta's Legislative Assembly

Status: Intent Not Met

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Alberta amend section 13 of the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act* to establish up to three new electoral divisions to accommodate the need for effective representation of Alberta's growing urban population, while not sacrificing current rural representation;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) urge the Government of Alberta to prioritize effective representation for rural Alberta by not approving a reduction in the number of constituencies in rural Alberta;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the AAMDC request the Government of Alberta to not implement the Alberta Electoral Boundary Commission's final recommendations until the following principles are prioritized:

- That geographic size limitations, local variations in population density, and accessibility of MLAs be prioritized as a determining factor in developing electoral boundaries; and
- Constituencies structure should be maintained to combine urban and rural areas to include a balance of urban and rural populations to reflect the urban-rural connectedness and dependency that exists on the ground for Alberta's regions; and
- To the extent possible, no ridings fracture rural municipalities into multiple constituencies.

DEVELOPMENTS: The government response to the resolution indicates that no additional changes were made or will be made to electoral boundaries and that the changes were codified in legislation in December 2017. As such, the resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**. RMA will continue to advocate for effective rural representation in future reviews of Alberta's electoral boundaries, and work with urban MLAs to ensure issues important to rural Albertans are understood and acted upon in Alberta's legislature.

CONTRIBUTORS

The Rural Municipalities of Alberta wishes to thank the Board of Directors members who provided content, input, and advice to this report card:

- Al Kemmere, President
- Kara Westerlund, Vice President
- Brian Brewin, Director, District 1
- Paul McLauchlin, Director, District 2
- Kathy Rooyakkers, Director, District 3
- Tom Burton, Director, District 4
- Soren Odegard, Director, District 5

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- Gerald Rhodes, Executive Director
- Tasha Blumenthal, Director of External Relations and Advocacy
- Wyatt Skovron, Senior Policy Advisor
- Alex Mochid, Policy Advisor
- Warren Noga, Policy Advisor