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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEDIA NOTICE: RMA Releases its Federal Election Platform

Nisku, AB, August 24, 2021 – In response to the upcoming federal election on September 20, 2021, the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) has released its [Federal Election Platform](#). As RMA represents Alberta’s rural municipalities, the platform includes recommendations in the following four key rural municipal priority areas:

- ◆ Rural broadband
- ◆ Disaster mitigation and recovery
- ◆ Infrastructure
- ◆ Drought recovery

RMA is requesting all Alberta Member of Parliament candidates to pledge action on RMA’s recommendations in each category.

Rural Alberta continues to lag behind the province’s towns and cities in access to broadband. As connectivity becomes increasingly important for economic development, maintaining local businesses, and participating in the digital economy, federal support of rural broadband is now more important than ever. RMA is calling on federal candidates to commit to ensuring that the funding already available under the Universal Broadband Fund (UBF) is allocated to rural areas in Alberta that truly need the support, rather than those which may be most profitable for internet service providers.

“The Universal Broadband Fund could be a game-changer for rural communities across Alberta and Canada. However, the federal government must ensure the funding goes to projects in areas that are most underserved. Previous federal broadband funding programs tended to focus on the ‘low-hanging fruit’ – projects in areas that already had decent connectivity and were more profitable for internet service providers, while the most isolated areas were left behind. Candidates for this year’s election will have a chance to ensure this most recent round of funding is used to truly level the connectivity playing field between rural and urban communities.” – Paul McLauchlin, RMA President

Natural disasters and extreme weather have become more severe in Alberta. When climate related disasters strike, local governments are the first to respond and their services and infrastructure are increasingly being affected by these events, with each region experiencing impacts differently. RMA is calling on federal candidates to continue to empower local leaders with the right tools to adapt to climate change and protect families and businesses from new weather extremes.

“The RMA appreciates that the Government of Canada provided \$1.4 billion over 12 years to top off the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund in Budget 2021. It is critical that this funding is not distributed strictly on a per capita basis, but that it considers high risk areas as well as communities that may lack the capacity to effectively implement mitigation strategies,” McLauchlin said. “Candidates in this year’s

election will have an opportunity to ensure that this funding will be used to empower local leaders to protect their communities from climate change.”

Rural municipalities manage approximately 75% of roads and 60% of bridges in Alberta. This critical infrastructure helps Alberta’s and Canada’s economy grow by providing the oil, gas, forestry, and agriculture industries with access to the natural resources that they depend on. As Alberta and Canada plan for post-COVID-19 recovery, RMA is calling for all federal candidates to recognize and support the important role that rural infrastructure plays in supporting Canada’s economy and community growth.

McLauchlin said, “Proper investment in Alberta’s rural municipal transportation networks benefits not only local communities, but also Alberta and Canada. Despite the outsized role that Alberta’s rural municipal infrastructure plays in supporting Canada’s economy, recent federal infrastructure programs treat rural infrastructure as an afterthought, with small portions of funding available for general rural support, and most funding reserved for projects only feasible in large urban centres. Candidates in this year’s election have the chance to recognize rural infrastructure needs as unique by ensuring that future funding aligns with the capacity and geographic realities of rural areas rather than only tailoring programs to major projects in large cities.”

The agriculture industry in the Prairies have been severely affected by drought conditions, sustained high temperatures, and wildfires. This has resulted in reduced yields for crop producers and a lack of feed for livestock producers. Agriculture is a vital industry in Alberta as it sustains many rural communities, and its products provide benefits across Canada. As extreme weather events are becoming more frequent in the Prairies, the RMA is calling on federal candidates to engage with the agricultural industry to create tools and resources that will help lessen the impact on these events in the future.

“Summer 2021 has been a challenge for farmers and agriculture producers across the Prairies due to severe drought conditions. To date, 31 rural municipalities across Alberta have declared agricultural disasters as the extreme weather has caused projected crop yields to drop by as much as 75% in some regions,” said McLauchlin. “Agriculture is a vital industry in Alberta and across Canada, and it is important that we support farmers and producers during these challenging times. Candidates running in this year’s election have the opportunity to show their support for farmers and producers by continuing to work together to create tools and resources that have the potential to lessen the impact of extreme weather events in the future.”

RMA looks forward to engaging with federal election candidates on these priority issues.

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