



**RMA**  
RURAL MUNICIPALITIES  
of ALBERTA

# RMA Advocacy Report Card

Winter 2022



## **RMA Advocacy Report Card: Winter 2022**

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# Introduction

The Advocacy Report Card is divided into three sections.

- ◆ **Section 1** provides detailed information on the government response to the fall 2021 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.

## 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.

<b>STATUS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Accepted</b>	Meets RMA criteria as outlined in a) the resolution and b) as per the expectations of the Board of Directors.
<b>Accepted in Principle</b>	The development addresses that action is being taken to meet the intent of the resolution, but further action is required.
<b>Accepted in Part</b>	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.
<b>Intent Not Met</b>	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.
<b>Incomplete Information</b>	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 2021 Resolutions

RMA recently received responses to the resolutions adopted at the fall 2021 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
1-21F	Emergency Medical Services Capacity and Service Delivery in Rural Alberta	Accepted in Principle
2-21F	Disaster Recovery Program Cost Allocations	Incomplete Information
3-21F	Vegetation Management on Alberta Provincial Highways	Intent Not Met
5-21F	Seniors' Foundation Requisitions	Accepted in Part
6-21F	Historical Resources Impact Assessments	Incomplete Information
7-21F	Awareness Campaign for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)	Intent Not Met
9-21F	Increasing Knowledge-Sharing Among Regulators of Cannabis Production Facilities	Incomplete Information
10-21F	Site C Dam – BC Hydro	Intent Not Met
ER1-21F	RMA Refusal to Engage in Merger Discussions with Alberta Municipalities (formerly known as AUMA)	Accepted

## Resolution 1-21F

### Emergency Medical Services Capacity and Service Delivery in Rural Alberta

Wheatland County

Carried

#### ► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services**

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta took responsibility for the delivery of **emergency medical services (EMS)** as it was a provincial health responsibility; and

WHEREAS at the time EMS transitioned from a municipal responsibility to a provincial responsibility the Government of Alberta committed to maintaining service levels; and

WHEREAS even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the capacity of the provincial EMS system had not increased adequately to meet escalating needs; and

WHEREAS this capacity issue has been exacerbated, both directly and indirectly, by the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS the number of “code reds”, where no ambulances are available in a community or in larger geographical areas of the province, is increasing; and

WHEREAS the health and safety of citizens continues to be a priority for municipalities; and

WHEREAS municipalities continue to frequently support the provincial health care system by providing medical first response through fire departments; and

WHEREAS there has been a recent upward trend in fire service wait times due to the increased length of time it takes for EMS to arrive on scene in municipalities that provide medical first response; and

WHEREAS a lack of EMS capacity is compromising timely access to emergency healthcare for all Albertans, and particularly those in rural areas;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to immediately consult with municipalities to develop a plan to make urgently needed improvements to the capacity, delivery, and performance of the emergency medical services system.**

#### ***Government Response***

##### Alberta Health Services

On January 24, 2022, the Minister of Health announced the establishment of an Alberta Provincial EMS Advisory Committee with the goal to provide immediate and long-term recommendations that will inform a new provincial EMS service plan. It was further announced that AHS Emergency Medical Services is taking immediate action with a 10-point plan to address the unprecedented pressure on the EMS system. The plan is made up of 10 initiatives designed to help reduce demands on existing resources, to increase availability of ambulances and to plan for the future.

Five initiatives outlined in the 10-point plan are already underway:

#### **1. Hiring more paramedics**

- ◆ Working to fill all openings quickly, and we are in conversations with the colleges about expanding these specialized paramedic training programs so there are more qualified candidates to hire.

## **2. Launching pilot projects to manage non-emergency inter-facility transfers**

- ◆ Two pilot projects are underway, in each of the Calgary and North Zones, where patients who do not need urgent medical care are transported from hospitals to appointments, or back to care homes and residences by means other than ambulances.

## **3. Initiating an 'Hours of Work' project to help ease staff fatigue**

- ◆ Project launched in November 2021, EMS is adjusting working hours, shifts, and scheduling at ambulance stations in highest need throughout the province to help to alleviate fatigue among staff.

## **4. Transferring low priority calls to other agencies in consultation with EMS physicians**

- ◆ These calls are transferred to other agencies such as the Poison and Drug Information Service (PADIS) and processes are in development to transfer calls to Health Link 811 when appropriate, and in consultation with our EMS physicians in dispatch.

## **5. Stopping the automatic dispatch of ambulances to motor vehicle collisions that do not report injuries**

- ◆ Previously, an ambulance would have been dispatched automatically and the crew would need to confirm there are no injuries. These calls are still responded to by police or fire as appropriate. EMS will always attend if injuries are subsequently identified.

In addition, work is underway on the following additional five initiatives:

## **6. Creating a new integrated operations centre in Calgary**

- ◆ Bringing paramedic leads, zone and hospital staff together for improved integration between EMS and the hospital system, to improve overall patient movement throughout the system.

## **7. Evaluation by an emergency communications officer to determine if an ambulance from out of area, though it may be closest to a 911 call, is most appropriate to respond**

- ◆ EMS will be implementing additional dispatching processes provincially, including evaluation by an emergency communications officer to determine if an ambulance from out of area, though it may be closest to a 911 call, is most appropriate to respond. This work is focused on getting ambulances back to their home communities as quickly as appropriate.

## **8. Implementing a pilot project in Red Deer**

- ◆ This will manage most patient transfers between facilities with dedicated transfer units, freeing up ambulances to handle emergency calls.

## **9. Allowing ambulances to be pre-empted from assignments, instead of being automatically dispatched when a 911 call is received, to ensure more ambulances are available for critical patients**

- ◆ This will allow EMS to divert ambulances to higher priority calls, when appropriate. This changes the way ambulances are assigned primarily in Calgary and Edmonton, and will assist with keeping ambulances in Suburban and Rural communities.

## **10. Developing a strategic 5-10 year provincial service plan for EMS delivery in the province.**

The 10-step plan listed above is in addition to actions that have been undertaken over the past several months to increase EMS capacity and respond to the demand.

These include deploying supervisors to calls, delaying some non-urgent transfers, and working closely with hospital teams to ensure timely flow through our emergency departments. EMS has brought on additional staff and ambulances which includes the addition of 30 full time and 70 temporary full time paramedic positions across the province.

### ***RMA Reaction and Follow-up***

The response from Alberta Health Services (AHS) references their 10-point plan to address short and long term issues with Alberta's emergency medical services (EMS) system. As many of the proposed solutions involve the use of pilots or studies, it is unclear if they will result in successful outcomes for the EMS system.

The AHS response also references the creation of the Alberta Provincial EMS Advisory Committee by Alberta Health. RMA is engaged with this advisory committee, which satisfies the intent of the operative clause. However, as the committee is still in its early stages, it is unclear if the committee will effectively capture the municipal voice and lead to meaningful improvements in EMS services in the province. RMA is involved as a chair and vice-chair in two subcommittees: EMS dispatch and air ambulance. RMA will continue to participate, and update the status of this resolution based on the level of ongoing engagement.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Principle** and will continue to advocate for improvements to the EMS system.

## Resolution 2-21F

### Disaster Recovery Program Cost Allocations

Brazeau County

*Carried*

#### ► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs, Alberta Treasury Board and Finance**

WHEREAS rural municipalities have recently experienced reductions in revenue and financial support from the Government of Alberta, including but not limited to changes to or the elimination of linear assessment, well drilling equipment tax, grants in place of taxes, and reductions to Municipal Sustainability Initiative program funding; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities have recently absorbed increased expenditures due to the downloading of provincial costs in areas such as policing and augmenting Alberta Health Services through medical first response programs; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities do not have direct access to any federal disaster relief funding or resources; and

WHEREAS in March 2021 Alberta Municipal Affairs introduced changes to the **Disaster Recovery Program (DRP)** that require municipalities to contribute 10% of the costs of eligible claims made under the DRP;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to remove the requirement for municipalities to contribute 10% of the costs of eligible claims made under the Disaster Recovery Program for disasters within their boundaries.**

#### ***Government Response***

Not yet received.

#### ***RMA Reaction and Follow-up***

As RMA has not yet received a response, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent not Met**. RMA will update the status when a response is received.

## Resolution 3-21F

### Vegetation Management on Alberta Provincial Highways

County of Two Hills

Carried

► ***Advocacy Target: Alberta Transportation, Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development***

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has not adequately maintained control of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds within provincial highway rights of way in recent years; and

WHEREAS this lack of control is affecting neighbouring landowners, as these invasive weeds are spreading into their fields; and

WHEREAS due to this lack of control, landowners adjacent to provincial highways are faced with increased costs to their vegetation control programs; and

WHEREAS invasive plants cause significant changes to ecosystems which may result in economic harm to agricultural and recreation industries; and

WHEREAS highway corridors facilitate the spread of invasive plants both locally and internationally; and

WHEREAS allowing noxious and invasive plant growth along highways increases the risk to human health (poisonous plants) and public safety by reducing visibility along road shoulders where wildlife is crossing or grazing; and

WHEREAS the most cost-effective strategy against invasive species is preventing them from establishing rather than relying on eliminating them after an infestation has begun; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta is responsible for weed control within the rights of way of the 31,000 kilometres of provincial highways in the province, as per the *Weed Control Act*; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta must allocate sufficient funds and capacity to meet its weed control requirements along provincial highways; and

WHEREAS in 2017, Alberta Transportation developed a four-year provincial vegetation management plan, which included a plan to manage noxious weeds in highway rights of way; and

WHEREAS the provincial vegetation management plan expires in 2021;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to reinstate a provincial vegetation management plan;**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA request that the provincial vegetation management plan enhance the previous plan's approach to managing noxious weeds, prohibited noxious weeds, and any unsafe vegetation on the full rights of way of all primary and secondary provincial highways;**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the enhanced plan should include but not be limited to an appropriately timed herbicide application in order to control all legislated weeds and a focus on mowing of the full right of way at a time that limits the spread of weed seeds.**

### ***Government Response***

#### Alberta Transportation

The Government of Alberta understands the importance of vegetation management. We have needed to closely manage our highway maintenance funding over the past few years, which has impacted some summer maintenance activities, such as full right-of-way mowing. Alberta Transportation's goal is to balance funding challenges with the need for maintenance activities that related to public safety, while still providing an acceptable overall level of service. As such, funding for vegetation management, including mowing, was mainly focused on safety-related concerns such as sight lines at intersections. However, we recognize the other benefits of mowing, such as improved drainage, improved visibility of wildlife, reduced risk of wildfire spread and controlling brush growth.

In order to ensure mowing and chemical weed control budgets are used in the best possible manner, Alberta Transportation is planning to conduct a program-level review of our vegetation management program to ensure its ongoing effectiveness. This effort will include development of a vegetation management plan framework; this framework will provide a consistent platform for an annual update regarding expected budgets, mowing frequency, herbicide application, innovations/trials, and stakeholder consultation/collaboration. The review is planned to begin in fall 2022.

Alberta Transportation is grateful for the assistance that the Agricultural Fieldmen of the various Agricultural Service Boards throughout the province have provided to date, with wee notices issued to Alberta Transportation's district offices being an effective driver for weed control action. This process allows for targeted mitigation at locations of the highest priority to the Agricultural Fieldmen and Albertans.

#### Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Rural Economic Development

Thank you for your December 13, 2021, letter regarding the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) Resolution 3-21F: Vegetation Management of Alberta Provincial Highways. As you indicate in your letter, the *Weed Control Act* defines the regulation of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds. This includes the requirement for weed control along provincial highways—this is the responsibility of Alberta Transportation.

Alberta Transportation is about to embark on a review of their current resources and practices around vegetation management, including weed management along roadsides. As necessary, Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development will support Alberta Transportation in that work.

I understand the frustrations that farmers and ranchers feel concerning invasive weed infestations on provincial roadways, as well as the threat these infestations can cause to adjacent farms and ranches. I will continue to work with my colleagues in other ministries to discuss the impact that weeds and uncontrolled vegetation can have on the safety of rural Albertans, as well as how weeds can threaten crop / forage productivity and global markets by contaminating exported hay and seed.

Thank you again for sharing this resolution. The growth and success of Alberta's agriculture industry remains at the heart of the Government of Alberta's economic strategy, and rural municipalities will continue to be an important partner in that success.

### ***RMA Reaction and Follow-up***

Alberta Transportation has indicated that they will be conducting a program-level review of the vegetation management program to ensure its ongoing effectiveness in fall 2022. The review will include the development of a vegetation management plan framework which will provide a consistent platform for an annual update regarding expected budgets, mowing frequency, herbicide application, innovations, and stakeholder consultation. However, RMA is concerned that this response does not address the legislative requirement to control weeds. RMA has written to Alberta Transportation expressing this concern, with a meeting planned for spring 2022. RMA appreciates that the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development will support Alberta Transportation in this work by discussing the impact that weeds and uncontrolled vegetation can have on the safety of rural Albertans and global markets. RMA looks forward to the outcome of this review and will seek opportunities to provide rural municipal perspective.

The RMA assigns this resolution as **Intent Not Met** and will re-evaluate the status of this resolution once the review of the vegetation management program is completed.

## Resolution 5-21F

### Seniors' Foundation Requisitions

Wheatland County

Carried

#### ► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Seniors and Housing**

WHEREAS the *Housing Act* (hereafter referred to as “the Act”) provides that a management body may annually requisition municipalities for which the management body provides lodge accommodation for the amount of the management body’s annual deficit for the previous fiscal year, and any amounts necessary to establish or continue a reserve fund for the management body; and

WHEREAS the Act provides that the management body shall supply a copy of its calculation of the requisitioned amount to the municipality; and

WHEREAS the Act provides that if a municipality agrees to contribute to the operating costs of any housing accommodation, other than lodge accommodation, provided by a management body, it shall make the contribution agreed to within 90 days after the mailing of the invoice by the management body; and

WHEREAS the Management Body Operation and Administration Regulation (hereafter referred to as “the Regulation”) provides that each year, a management body must prepare and submit to the Minister a business plan that includes the operating budget for the upcoming three-fiscal-year period, a capital plan for the upcoming five-fiscal-year period, and any other information required by the Minister; and

WHEREAS the Regulation places limits on reserve funds, including a requirement for ministerial approval to establish reserves and limits on the amount of reserves in relation to the management body’s estimated capital and operational costs; and

WHEREAS the current Act and Regulation lacks clarity regarding the scope of housing management body requisitions, specifically relating to capital project costs; and

WHEREAS this lack of clarity has resulted in situations in which housing management bodies have attempted to requisition municipalities for capital costs, expenses based on the current year’s budget, and to contribute to reserve funds not approved by members, all of which do not align with the intent of the Act and Regulation;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request the Government of Alberta to engage municipalities, and membership associations such the Alberta Seniors and Community Housing Association in a review of the *Alberta Housing Act* to provide clarity on requisitioning for capital assets, associated interest costs and debenture payment obligations for member municipalities;**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA request the Government of Alberta to review the oversight of the Ministry of Seniors and Housing over housing management bodies (HMBs) to ensure that all HMBs are correctly and consistently requisitioning municipalities under the requirements of the *Housing Act*;**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA request that the Government of Alberta provide enhanced training and education, including a training guide to municipal councils and HMBs on the *Housing Act* and the Management Body Operation and Administration Regulation to ensure they have a clear understanding of their financial powers, limitations and responsibilities, including related to requisitioning and reserve creation;**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA request the Government of Alberta to amend the *Housing Act* to clearly state the ability of municipalities to approve or deny requests for capital projects.**

## Government Response

### Alberta Seniors and Housing

1. **Excerpt from Resolution:** *“THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request the Government of Alberta to engage municipalities, and membership associations such the Alberta Seniors and Community Housing Association in a review of the Alberta Housing Act to provide clarity on requisitioning for capital assets, associated interest costs and debenture payment obligations for member municipalities.”*

**Government of Alberta Response:** Requisitions are based on the net operating lodge deficit before requisitions and capital asset amortization, and include the principal portion of long-term debt. Operating and capital reserves, as agreed to by the municipality, are in addition to the net operating requisitions.

Implementation on *Stronger Foundations: Alberta’s 10-year strategy to improve and expand affordable housing*, released in November 2021, has started. The strategy includes ongoing engagement with municipalities, housing management bodies, and membership associations to support key strategy actions, which will include examination of the Seniors’ Lodge Program.

2. **Excerpt from Resolution:** *“FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA request the Government of Alberta to review the oversight of the Ministry of Seniors and Housing over housing management bodies (HMBs) to ensure all HMBs are correctly and consistently requisitioning municipalities under the requirements of the Housing Act.”*

**Government of Alberta Response:** Section 7 of the *Alberta Housing Act* enables the municipalities requisitioned to determine the basis on which the requisitions are to be shared. Therefore, it may be challenging to identify if a HMB is requisitioning incorrectly, unless the municipalities raise that as an issue. However, the ministry does receive annual audited financial statements and various quarterly reporting from all HMBs and, before the COVID-19 pandemic, performed on-site operational reviews. Operational reviews will re-commence once it is safe to do so.

3. **Excerpt from Resolution:** *“FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA request that the Government of Alberta provide enhanced training and education, including a training guide to municipal councils and HMBs on the Housing Act and the Management Body Operation and Administration Regulation to ensure they have a clear understanding of their financial powers, limitations and responsibilities, including related to requisitioning and reserve creation.”*

**Government of Alberta Response:** Seniors and Housing provides training and education opportunities for all HMBs through the ministry’s HMB Housing Advisors. Training may include reviewing the *Alberta Housing Act* and its regulations, processes, and specific requirements for programs, and HMB board roles and responsibilities. HMBs may contact their Housing Advisor at any time to schedule training sessions, including information sessions for municipalities. Included with this letter is a HMB and Municipality Relationship document that will provide additional clarity. Ministry staff will also share your request with the Alberta Seniors & Community Housing Association, as it also assists with education for HMB administrators and board members. As part of the implementation of *Stronger Foundations*, Seniors and Housing will provide further guidance on competency-based governance.

4. **Excerpt from Resolution:** *“FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA request the Government of Alberta to amend the Housing Act to clearly state the ability of municipalities to approve or deny requests for capital projects.”*

**Government of Alberta Response:** Thank you for this suggestion; we will consider adding this information in future amendments. Seniors and Housing’s current process, although not defined in regulations, requires motions from each member municipality approving the addition of any facilities to the Seniors’ Lodge Program. Our partnership with municipalities is vital to the Seniors’ Lodge Program, and my ministry will not add a new lodge, or substantial addition to an existing lodge, without the member municipality’s agreement to be requisitioned for that facility.

### ***RMA Reaction and Follow-up***

The Government of Alberta response is broken down by their comments on each operative clause. The first clause asks for a review of the Housing Act. The response indicates upcoming consultations on a 10-year plan, including the Lodge program. However, the response does not indicate a willingness to open the Housing Act itself for review.

The second operative clause asks for Ministry oversight of housing management body requisitions. The Government response states that municipalities have the power to request details on requisitions. Additionally, the response indicates a plan to resume provincial government operational reviews when it is safe to do so following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The third operative clause asks for more training for housing management body members. The response highlights existing training programs available. RMA will monitor the development of the Stronger Foundations plan to see if additional governance training is made available.

The final operative clause asks for the ability of municipalities to approve or deny capital project requests. The response indicates that this power is already in place as Seniors and Housing requires a motion from all requisitioned municipalities supporting a large capital project, however, this is not explicit in the regulations. There is a commitment to consider adding this in the next round of regulation amendments.

Based on the Government of Alberta response to the four asks of the resolution, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Part**, and will watch for additional updates that may address this resolution.

## Resolution 6-21F

### Historical Resources Impact Assessments

MD of Willow Creek

Carried

#### ► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Culture and Status of Women**

WHEREAS the Historical Resources Management Branch of Alberta Culture administers matters related to the *Historical Resources Act*; and

WHEREAS historical resources fall into four categories: archaeological sites, paleontological sites, historic buildings and other structures and aboriginal traditional use sites; and

WHEREAS approvals for new surface material operations are administered through the Code of Practice for Pits by Alberta Environment and Parks which requires compliance to Section 37 of the *Historical Resources Act*; and

WHEREAS for surface material operations less than five hectares in size on public land or Class 2 pits on private land (as defined in the Code of Practice for Pits), the applicant must consult Alberta Culture's Listing of Historical Resources prior to initiation of any development activities; and

WHEREAS the Listing of Historical Resources administered by Alberta Culture identifies lands as containing or having high potential to contain historic resources; and

WHEREAS designation of the historic resource value on lands (which evaluates the potential of the land to contain historic resources as determined by the Alberta Historic Resources Management Branch) is made without widespread public consultation; and

WHEREAS many landowners are unaware of the regulatory requirements that exist as a result of historical resource designations placed without notification on private lands; and

WHEREAS the regulatory requirements linked to the designation of lands as having potential for a high historic resource value places a high financial risk upon those developing resources upon those lands, as development requires a historical resources impact assessment and approval from Alberta Culture; and

WHEREAS existing gravel pits that expand beyond five hectares require *Historical Resource Act* approval, which may require numerous historical resources impact assessments to be undertaken despite the disturbances that have already occurred in the immediate area; and

WHEREAS all costs to undertake a historical resources impact assessment are the responsibility of the landowner or developer; and

WHEREAS all historical resources are the property of the Crown;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to review the requirements and costs for historical resources impact assessments be funded by the Government of Alberta;**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that the Government of Alberta develop a formula for financial compensation to landowners should discoveries of historical resources on the land result in restrictions to land use.

*Government Response*

Not yet received.

*RMA Reaction and Follow-up*

As RMA has not yet received a response, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent not Met**. RMA will update the status when a response is received.

## Resolution 7-21F

### Awareness Campaign for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)

MD of Willow Creek

Carried

#### ► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy**

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has now joined forces with the governments of New Brunswick, Ontario and Saskatchewan as a signatory to the **Small Modular Reactor (SMR) Memorandum of Understanding**; and

WHEREAS these provinces have collectively agreed to collaborate on the advancement of SMRs as a clean energy option to address climate change and regional energy demands, while supporting economic growth and innovation; and

WHEREAS the SMR feasibility study concludes that the development of SMRs would support domestic energy needs, curb greenhouse gas emissions and position Canada as a global leader in this emerging technology; and

WHEREAS there is a need for the public to be provided with more information and education on SMRs which is essential in helping them to understand, comprehend and support this emerging and innovative technology;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta encourage and collaborate with the Government of Alberta to create an awareness campaign to engage with the public on information related to nuclear technology and small modular reactors specifically.**

#### **Government Response**

##### Alberta Energy

In Alberta, electricity generation is developed and financed entirely by private investment. Developers determine the size, fuel source, and location of new generation facilities based on a variety of factors, including the cost and performance of different technologies. Typically, Alberta power generation projects must be approved for operations prior to their implementation by Alberta's regulatory authorities. However, the federal government regulates all nuclear energy projects in Canada, including SMRs. The Ministry of Energy is working with federal and provincial regulators, including the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, Alberta Utilities Commission, and Alberta Energy Regulator to better understand the process for potential SMR development in Alberta.

In April 2021, the Government of Alberta signed a memorandum of understanding with New Brunswick, Ontario and Saskatchewan to support the development and deployment of SMRs. The participating provinces are currently developing a strategic plan for SMR development, scheduled to be released in early 2022. In addition, the Ministry of Energy is collaborating with Alberta Innovates to connect stakeholders to organizations like Invest Alberta, Natural Resources Canada, Prairies Economic Development Canada and CSA Group.

#### **RMA Reaction and Follow-up**

RMA appreciates Alberta Energy's response outlining the collaboration between the federal government, Alberta Innovates, and other provinces that has been undertaken to develop a strategic plan for SMR development. With both the federal and provincial governments supporting SMR's, it will be essential that a strong partnership between government, industry, and stakeholders be forged. However, public acceptance will also be crucial and there is a strong need to educate Albertans about the merits and benefits of this form of energy.

In March 2022, the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Ontario released their joint strategic plan on SMR deployment. The plan includes a small section on public engagement with a particular focus on education in Saskatchewan and Alberta due to the lack of existing nuclear facilities in each province. However, the plan does not reference municipalities in any way, either as the targets of engagement or potential promotional partners for SMR technology.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**, as the response solely focuses on the partnerships being developed with the federal government and industry and does not indicate that the Government of Alberta will create a public awareness campaign. RMA will continue to advocate for the development of a public awareness campaign and is happy to collaborate on it to ensure that the rural municipal perspective is present and that SMR information is being distributed to rural residents.

## Resolution 9-21F

### Increasing Knowledge-Sharing Among Regulators of Cannabis Production Facilities

Kneehill County and Wheatland County

*Carried*

#### ► **Advocacy Target: Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Health Canada**

WHEREAS governing, managing, and enforcing cannabis legislation is a joint responsibility shared by the federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal levels of government; and

WHEREAS under the *Cannabis Act*, cannabis may be grown in various quantities depending on the specified purpose, as permitted by Health Canada, creating significant variance in the size of cannabis operations that may be deemed “legal”; and

WHEREAS all individuals wishing to obtain any of the available federal licences to grow, process, or sell cannabis are expected to comply with all applicable provincial or territorial laws, as well as municipal bylaws (e.g., zoning and building permits); and

WHEREAS individuals seeking licences, or having obtained licences, to cultivate, process, or sell cannabis from Health Canada for medicinal purposes are expected to notify the municipality of planned growing activities, however, are not required to obtain confirmation that municipal requirements have been met; and

WHEREAS instances of non-compliance or contravention of existing land use regulations have been difficult for municipalities to observe and/or take action against, due to a lack of knowledge of legal sites of cannabis production currently operating within the municipality’s borders; and

WHEREAS the lack of information available to municipalities related to cannabis production sites has allowed for individuals licensed to grow small quantities of medical cannabis to abuse this license to grow excessive quantities; and

WHEREAS municipalities are responsible for land-use zoning and permitting of activities within their borders, which includes where cannabis can be commercially grown, processed, sold, and consumed; and

WHEREAS municipalities often struggle to manage land-use activities and conduct compliance monitoring on facilities producing cannabis because consistent information on the nature of such facilities is not available to municipalities; and

WHEREAS the risks to individuals or property related to the production of cannabis cannot be addressed or mitigated by municipalities without the municipality being aware of such activities taking place within its borders; and

WHEREAS there is currently no system available for municipalities to acquire information on planned or existing sites of cannabis production from other levels of government that currently possess that information; and

WHEREAS the only means by which municipalities may learn of sites of cannabis production come in the form of voluntary disclosure from the cannabis producer to the municipality, or if an individual lodges an official complaint to the municipality; and

WHEREAS existing gaps in cannabis legislation prevent municipalities from accurately distinguishing between legal and illegal growing operations; and

WHEREAS municipalities recognize that individuals have a right to privacy, particularly as it relates to medicating for medical conditions or ailments, and that the enforcement of local legislation must respect these rights to privacy;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) collaborate with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to advocate to Health Canada that municipalities be given open and continuous access to information on all licensed sites of cannabis production within their boundaries;**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate to Health Canada that municipalities be given open and continuous information for the purposes of compliance monitoring and enforcement, including the results of any investigation conducted by an “inspector,” as described within the *Cannabis Act*.**

### ***Government Response***

Not yet received.

### ***RMA Reaction and Follow-up***

As RMA has not yet received a response, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent not Met**. RMA will update the status when a response is received.

## Resolution 10-21F

### Site C Dam – BC Hydro

County of Northern Lights

*Carried*

#### ► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Parks, Executive Council**

WHEREAS BC Hydro is constructing a hydroelectric dam (known as the “Site C Dam”) on the Peace River near Fort St. John, British Columbia; and

WHEREAS the project is experiencing unprecedented geotechnical challenges including downstream movement of the spillway and powerhouse foundation due to weak and unstable geology underlying the site; and

WHEREAS BC Hydro and the Government of British Columbia are not forthcoming with important technical information regarding unprecedented efforts to reinforce the foundation to prevent further movement or failure of the dam itself; and

WHEREAS BC Hydro failed to undertake sufficient vital geotechnical surveys of material in the riverbed underlying the earth fill dam prior to beginning construction, despite the site being rejected in the 1990s for geotechnical concerns; and

WHEREAS Alberta has thousands of people residing in the Peace River valley downstream from this structure, and billions of dollars in vital infrastructure at risk in the event of a catastrophic dam failure; and

WHEREAS BC Hydro has not responded to questions regarding their financial liability in the event that their actions result in downstream damage in Alberta;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to obtain from the Government of British Columbia all technical reports and other relevant information from the BC Hydro Site C project that is currently being withheld from the public;**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Alberta use the information collected to conduct an independent safety assessment of the structure to ensure that Albertans, as well as extremely important infrastructure, are not being subjected to unacceptable risk.**

### ***Government Response***

#### Alberta Environment and Parks

The GOA provided feedback, including potential downstream impacts to Alberta, during the Site C dam’s environmental impact assessment stage. This information included the interests of northern municipalities and industry. Following the assessment, the Government of British Columbia, the federal government, and all other municipal or regional jurisdictions approved the project’s construction (with conditions) to address specific concerns relevant to each jurisdiction, including Alberta stakeholders.

Alberta is satisfied with the conditions and continues to monitor their implementation. Examples of conditions include the following:

- BC Hydro must work with the GOA to develop an adaptive management plan to mitigate potential risks to infrastructure downstream of the Site C dam caused by low water flows during reservoir filling and project operation. This work is ongoing, with reservoir filling expected to begin in 2023.

- BC Hydro must assess the potential impacts of a cascade dam breach or any potential accidents and malfunctions at upstream dams (such as the W.A.C. Bennett and Peace Canyon dams), in accordance with the Canadian Dam Association's Dam Safety Guidelines.
- Before starting operations, BC Hydro must share its results with the GOA and authorities from towns that could be affected, and create emergency preparedness plans to address potential cascading dam breaches, accidents or malfunctions. This is also in accordance with the Dam Safety Guidelines.
- BC Hydro must also periodically engage the GOA and Alberta's emergency management officials on communication and contingency plans to respond to any potential emergencies.

Following the preparation of emergency preparedness plans for British Columbia and Alberta, BC Hydro plans to assess potential cascade impacts in 2022. Alberta Environment and Parks will create our province's emergency preparedness plan based on BC Hydro's study results, including an additional inundation study by Alberta, to assess impacts to our province. Alberta's emergency management plan will address any unlikely or unforeseen disastrous events.

The department is performing a quality assurance review of a recent inundation study for Alberta using BC Hydro's information and updating its existing emergency preparedness plan based on the review. I am pleased to advise the department will share its updated emergency preparedness plan, including inundation maps, with all of Alberta's impacted rural municipalities. Alberta will revisit the entire process once BC Hydro completes its study for Site C projects, which includes the cascade impacts of potential failures or malfunction of existing upstream dams.

### ***RMA Reaction and Follow-up***

The Alberta Environment and Parks response indicates that the GOA provided feedback during Site C dam's environmental impact assessment stage and collaborated with the Government of British Columbia, the federal government, and all other municipal or regional jurisdictions impacted to approve the project with conditions to address specific concerns relevant to each jurisdiction. Though this is positive to hear, the Government of British Columbia's technical report and all other related information on Site C dam is not being shared publicly.

Alberta Environment and Parks indicated that BC Hydro plans to assess potential cascade impacts in 2022. The results of this study will help inform the creation of Alberta emergency preparedness plan, including an additional inundation study by Alberta, to assess impacts to our province. The emergency plan will be available to the public.

Though Alberta Environment and Parks are taking steps in the right direction, the GOA has not indicated any plans to share the Government of British Columbia's technical report and all other related information on Site C dam publicly. Once the Alberta emergency preparedness plan is publicly available, RMA will assess it to determine if it meets the second operative clause of this resolution. The RMA assigns this resolution as **Intent Not Met**.

## Resolution ER1-21F

### RMA Refusal to Engage in Merger Discussions with Alberta Municipalities (formerly known as AUMA)

Northern Sunrise County

*Carried as amended*

#### ► **Advocacy Target: Rural Municipalities of Alberta**

WHEREAS the **Rural Municipalities of Alberta** (RMA) has provided a clear and constant voice for rural Alberta for over 100 years; and

WHEREAS RMA represents Alberta's sixty-nine rural municipalities that collectively provide municipal governance to over 85% of Alberta's landmass; and

WHEREAS RMA provides a variety of member services for rural municipalities, including advocacy, elected officials education, insurance management, networking, research, risk management, and business services; and

WHEREAS the RMA Board of Directors is comprised of democratically elected rural representatives who have been given a clear mandate to provide a strong voice to advance the ideals, values and concerns of rural municipalities; and

WHEREAS the organization formerly known as the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association has recently rebranded as **Alberta Municipalities** (AM); and

WHEREAS the "Alberta Municipalities" brand incorrectly suggests that AM represents all municipalities in Alberta; and

WHEREAS RMA and AM each serve a distinct member base with specific interests and priorities; and

WHEREAS RMA and AM have a history of collaboration on issues of mutual importance; and

WHEREAS a merger between RMA and AM would result in lost representation, lost autonomy, lost influence with senior levels of government and would harm the interests of all municipalities in Alberta;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta refuse any attempt to merge with any urban association.**

#### ***Government Response***

N/A

#### ***RMA Reaction and Follow-up***

RMA has a long history of supporting its members in advocacy and business services. RMA's members are unique among municipalities across Canada due to their large size and extensive infrastructure networks, and therefore RMA prides itself on applying a rural municipal lens to policy and advocacy issues, which would likely be diluted or overlooked if a single municipal association were to represent all municipalities in Alberta.

While RMA has, and will continue to, collaborate with Alberta Municipalities on issues of mutual importance, RMA has never considered merging the two associations, and has no plans to in the future. This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

## Section 2: Advocacy Report Card

The following table is a summary of RMA’s current resolutions excluding the resolutions adopted in fall 2021, 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
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>		
4-21S	Agriculture Service Board Provincial Committee Funding	Intent Not Met
3-20F	Support for Alberta Farmland Trust	Accepted in Principle
8-20F	Enhancing Support for Farmers When a State of Agricultural Disaster is Declared	Intent Not Met
ER1-20S	Loss of 2% Strychnine	Incomplete Information
23-19F	Mandatory Agriculture Education in the Classroom	Intent Not Met
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
<b>BROADBAND AND CONNECTIVITY</b>		
9-20F	CRTC Aggregate Wholesale Pricing to Mandate Rural Investment	Accepted in Part
<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>		
19-20F	Reinstatement of the Benefit Contribution Grant for Early Childhood Educators	Intent Not Met
3-19F	Development of a Rural and Remote Lens for Government Services	Intent Not Met
<b>EMERGENCY SERVICES</b>		
14-19F	Provincial Funding for Regional Air Ambulance	Accepted
21-19F	Cellular 911 Call Answer Fees Increase	Accepted

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
<b>ENERGY</b>		
1-21S	Alberta Energy Regulator Directive 006 – Licensee Liability Rating (LLR) Program and License Transfer Process	Intent Not Met
10-20F	Weed Issues on Oil and Gas Sites in Rural Alberta	Intent Not Met
7-19F	Utility Distribution Rates in Rural Communities and Public Facilities	Intent Not Met
9-19F	Setback Referrals for Development Near Sour Gas Facilities in Crown Land Areas	Intent Not Met
11-19F	Requirement for Municipal Authority Input on Energy Resource Development Projects	Intent Not Met
1-19S	Municipal Support for the Energy Industry	Accepted
7-19S	Solar Power Reclamation	Intent Not Met
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>		
5-21S	Preservation of Water Quality and Access to Water by Albertans	Incomplete Information
12-20F	Expansion of Elk Hunting for Management in Agriculture Production Areas	Intent Not Met
15-20F	Security Deposits for Dispositions	Intent Not Met
1-20S	Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive	Accepted in Part
4-20S	Water and Wastewater – Laws, Regulations and Funding	Intent Not Met
4-19F	Alberta Environment and Parks Water and Wastewater Facility and Landfill Approvals	Intent Not Met
13-19F	Provincial Extended Producer Responsibility Regulations	Accepted
19-19F	Water Security in Southern Alberta	Intent Not Met
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
<b>HEALTH AND SENIORS</b>		

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
ER2-20S	New Physician Funding Framework	Accepted in Principle
ER3-20S	Housing Management Body Compliance Requirements During Pandemic Response	Accepted in Part
20-19F	Policies for Supporting Community Hospice Associations	Accepted in Principle
12-19S	Making Children’s Healthcare a Priority in Alberta	Accepted in Part
<b>MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE</b>		
2-20F	Blue-Ribbon Panel to Review Unpaid Taxes Owed by Oil and Gas Companies	Intent Not Met
4-20F	Provincial Policing Costs Levy – Designate as a Requisition	Intent Not Met
17-20F	Rural Small Business Properties Assessment Sub-Classes Amendment	Intent Not Met
2-20S	Additional Depreciation of Machinery and Equipment Property (Schedule D)	Intent Not Met
1-19F	Priority of Unpaid Property Taxes on Linear Property	Accepted in Part
6-19F	Municipal Recourse for Solvent Companies Choosing Not to Pay Taxes	Accepted
12-19F	<i>Libraries Act</i> Review and Rural Library Services	Intent Not Met
16-19F	GST for Grants and Subsidies Interpretation	Accepted in Part
8-19S	Reinstatement of the Municipal Officer’s Expense Allowance	Accepted
<b>PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT</b>		
3-21S	Personal Cannabis Production for Medical Use	Incomplete Information
6-21S	National Flood Insurance Strategy and Community Resiliency Advocacy	Accepted in Part
7-20F	Amendments to <i>Municipal Government Act</i> Section 619	Intent Not Met
13-20F	Provincial Government Disaster Recovery Program Payments	Intent Not Met
16-20F	Federal and Provincial Disaster Support	Intent Not Met
18-20F	Municipal Decision-making on Fire Bans in Hamlets Within Forest Protection Area	Accepted
ER1-19F	Dissolution of Mandatory Growth Management Boards	Intent Not Met

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
<b><i>POLICING AND RURAL CRIME</i></b>		
2-21S	<i>Police Act</i> Review	Incomplete Information
1-20F	Police Funding Model Freeze	Intent Not Met
2-19F	Government of Alberta's Police Costing Test Model	Intent Not Met
10-19F	Community Peace Officer Access to RCMP Radio Channels	Accepted in Principle
<b><i>RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</i></b>		
5-20S	Regional Economic Development Alliances Continued Provincial Funding	Intent Not Met
6-20S	Economic State of Crisis	Intent Not Met
<b><i>TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</i></b>		
15-19F	Provincial Highway Access and Setback Authority	Accepted in Principle
17-19F	Airports Capital Assistance Program Funding for Regional Airports in Canada	Incomplete Information
3-19S	Light Weight Concrete Bridge Girders	Intent Not Met
<b><i>OTHER</i></b>		
5-20F	Legislated Notice Requirement	Intent Not Met
6-20F	Government of Alberta Embargoed Committee Work	Intent Not Met
5-19F	Landowners' Rights	Intent Not Met
8-19F	Opportunity for Improvement in FCM Representation of Rural Issues and Western Perspectives	Incomplete Information
10-19S	Strategic Direction for the RMA	Accepted

## AGRICULTURE

### Resolution 4-21S

#### Agriculture Service Board Provincial Committee Funding

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to ensure adequate and sustainable funding for the Agricultural Service Board Provincial Committee.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta's (GOA) response highlights the important role Agriculture Service Boards play in supporting provincial legislation. RMA appreciates this recognition; however, the resolution specifically calls for sustainable funding for the Agricultural Service Board Provincial Committee. The GOA response indicates a willingness to discuss further but does not indicate a long-term funding arrangement. As a result, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

### Resolution 3-20F

#### Support for Alberta Farmland Trust

*Status: Accepted in Principle*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that the Government of Alberta support the creation of agricultural conservation easements on lands within Alberta's highly productive, food-producing areas through the following means:**

- 1. The establishment of agricultural conservation as a priority under the Alberta Land Trust Grant Program so that agricultural land trusts can access funding, and benefit from policy support;**
- 2. Any other policies and programs that the Government of Alberta identifies to create functional mechanisms for the protection and conservation of farmland in Alberta; and**

**FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA request that the Government of Canada work with Alberta and other provinces to establish an "AgriGift" program similar to the existing "EcoGift" in support of the protection, conservation and enhancement of Canada's most valuable food producing agricultural lands.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** RMA appreciates Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development's (AAFRED) understanding of issues related to the loss of prime agricultural land and their commitment to develop policies to support the use of conservation easements for agricultural land under the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*. While the Government of Canada has not yet responded, AAFRED indicates they support amending the *Income Tax Act* to recognize donors of agricultural lands for protection.

The AAFRED response also indicates a willingness to modify the Alberta Land Trust Grant Program to provide funding for agricultural easements. This work has begun, as the response from Alberta Environment and Parks indicates the Alberta Land Trust Grant Program is available for agricultural land, currently focusing on native rangeland conservation associated with ranching operations. The Alberta Land Trust Grant Program uses an annual granting process. Changes have not been made to the grant to allow for its use for agricultural lands.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Principle**, and will revisit this assessment after receiving responses from the Government of Canada, and based on further action from the Government of Alberta.

## Resolution 8-20F

### Enhancing Support for Farmers When a State of Agricultural Disaster is Declared

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that the Government of Alberta review supports for farmers when a state of agricultural disaster is formally declared within a municipality; and

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that RMA request that the Government of Alberta develop additional programs to enhance support to farmers when a state of agricultural disaster is declared; and

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that RMA request that the Government of Alberta take a regional approach to declaring agricultural disasters such that they can be initiated within a region of Alberta where several municipalities have declared a state of agricultural disaster to allow for the release of reserve funds for farmers in that region.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** RMA appreciates the explanation of the various programs available to farmers through Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) and how a review of these programs is triggered after a declaration of agricultural disaster. The explanation of these programs notes that AFSC does include a regional component to their review. However, the resolution calls for a Government of Alberta review of existing programs, which the resolution response does not commit to. Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development's response goes on to indicate there are no plans to establish new programs to support farmers when an agricultural disaster is declared.

2021 saw an increase in the number of municipal declarations of agricultural disasters. Due to the conditions in much of Alberta, the Government of Alberta and AFSC have announced several new assistance measures, including reducing crop insurance premiums. RMA appreciates these initiatives to support farmers, however, because they are not tied to municipal agricultural disaster declarations, these changes do not address the nature of this resolution.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to advocate for support for the agricultural sector in response to states of agricultural disaster.

## Resolution ER1-20S

### Loss of 2% Strychnine

*Status: Incomplete Information*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that Health Canada and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) reinstate the use of 2% Liquid Strychnine on a permanent basis to agricultural producers to utilize on their farms for control of Richardson's Ground Squirrels (RGS), or that Health Canada and the PMRA provide an alternative solution that produces as effective a result as strychnine in a financially responsible manner for the continued control of RGS.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** RMA recognizes the ongoing need for tools for farmers to control pest species that impact agricultural information. As RMA has not yet received a response from the advocacy targets identified above, this resolution is assigned the status of **Incomplete Information**.

## Resolution 23-19F

### Mandatory Agriculture Education in the Classroom

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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 2-19S**

### **Access to Agriculture-Specific Mental Health Resources**

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**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.

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.

The Do More Agriculture Foundation has hosted several mental health webinars in 2020. While these webinars do not meet the need of a 24/7 support line, they do share information and raise awareness of mental health issues for farmers. Additionally, the Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA) provides mental health resources through the Farm Mental Health Network. However, this is not a 24/7 emergency support system.

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**

**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, launched 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.

## BROADBAND AND CONNECTIVITY

### Resolution 9-20F

#### CRTC Aggregate Wholesale Pricing to Mandate Rural Investment

*Status: Accepted In Part*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) urge the Government of Canada and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to reconsider its position on wholesale internet pricing; and

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that RMA request the Government of Canada and CRTC to create a financial framework where communication and internet fee structures include funds for mandatory investment of network expansion into currently unserved areas of Canada by all telecom and internet service providers.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) released Telecom Decision CRTC 2021-181 in May 2021. This decision reversed the previous CRTC decision regarding wholesale internet pricing and reverts wholesale rates to 2016 level. This decision satisfies the first operative clause of Resolution 9-20F.

The second operative clause asks for guaranteed investment in rural broadband infrastructure through the collection of a fee. The CRTC response describes how their broadband fund is open for eligible projects to provide access to 50/10 internet speeds. However, these funds are not the result of a fee, and do not guarantee investment in rural broadband.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted In Part**, and will continue to advocate for funding for underserved areas of the province.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES

### Resolution 19-20F

Reinstatement of the Benefit Contribution Grant for Early Childhood Educators

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate that the Government of Alberta reinstate the Benefit Contribution Grant for early childhood educators, retroactive to July 1, 2020.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response states that the program that this resolution appears to reference is the Northern Living Allowance (NLA) rather than the Benefit Contribution Grant (BCG). Both the NLA and BCG are important tools for ensuring stability for early childhood educators in northern Alberta, and, in the case of the BCG, throughout the province. The Government of Alberta response highlights their recent relief funding in response to COVID-19. While this funding is appreciated, the response indicates that funding will not be restored for the NLA. As a result, this resolution is assigned the status of **Intent Not Met**.

## EMERGENCY SERVICES

### Resolution 14-19F

#### Provincial Funding for Regional Air Ambulance

*Status: Accepted*

**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.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** Alberta Health Services (AHS) conducted a review of current services that provide helicopter EMS in rural and remote areas of Alberta. RMA provided feedback on the AHS helicopter ambulance review, emphasizing the important role helicopter ambulances play in rural healthcare.

Alberta Health released their Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) report in June 2021. The report recommends that STARS become the sole provider of HEMS in Alberta, with HALO and HERO being phased out. However, recent announcements have committed funding to cover up to 50% of HALO and HERO operational costs for the next five years. This suggests this specific HEMS report recommendation will not be accepted. HEMS is also being considered as part of a 2022 EMS review – RMA will monitor this process for impacts on HEMS and ground EMS.

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.

As a result of recent operational funding agreements for HALO and HERO and the HEMS review this resolution is assigned the status of **Accepted**.

### Resolution 21-19F

#### Cellular 911 Call Answer Fees Increase

*Status: Accepted*

**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).

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response acknowledges that the costs of implementing Next Generation (NG) 911 services will have significant impact on Alberta PSAPs and that research is underway to determine how best to fund required upgrades.

In June 2021, Bill 56: *Local Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2021* received Royal Assent. Bill 56 includes amendments to the *Emergency 911 Act*, as well as expected changes to the *Emergency 911*

*Levy Regulation*, that will have the effect of increasing the 911 levy payable by wireless subscribers from \$0.44 per month to \$0.95 per month beginning on September 1, 2021. This levy increase is expected to better support 911 call centres to upgrade technology to comply with new Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) mandated changes.

Bill 56 also broadens the eligible recipients of the levy revenues to include secondary 911 call centres. This change means that levy revenues will now be accessed by an additional nine secondary call centres, including several operated by the Government of Alberta and RCMP. The exact impacts of this expansion on the revenues that will flow to primary call centres is not known, but RMA is concerned that the broadened pool of levy recipients will partially offset the increased revenues that would be received by the primary call centres due to the levy increase.

As the transition process to NG911 has begun, municipalities will not only be required to take on some level of costs to support PSAPs in acquiring needed technological upgrades, but will also be required to invest time and money in upgrading and standardizing their addressing information for use in the GIS database required for NG911. While the costs of these upgrades are unknown and may vary by municipality, RMA is concerned that the levy increase may be inadequate to cover both PSAP and municipal costs.

In Budget 2022, the Government of Alberta invested an additional \$23 million in 911 call centre support. While it is unknown how this added funding will be used, RMA is hopeful that it will help to offset municipal costs associated with upgrading PSAPs.

Although this resolution calls for the levy to be increased to \$0.97, RMA considers the actual increase to \$0.95 to meet the general intent of the resolution. This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

## ENERGY

### Resolution 1-21S

Alberta Energy Regulator Directive 006 – Licensee Liability Rating (LLR) Program and License Transfer Process

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Alberta Energy Regulator to amend Directive 006 to include as a condition of transfer of all oil, oil sands, natural gas, and coal resource assets from one company to another that municipal property tax arrears be paid in full.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta announced a new Liability Management Framework which includes a series of mechanisms and requirements to improve and expedite reclamation efforts and set clear industry expectations throughout the life cycle of oil and gas projects. Under this new framework, the Government of Alberta directed the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) to develop new liability management programs to implement this framework. In December 2021, the AER released Directive 088: Licensee Life-Cycle Management, which replaces Directive 006: Licensee Liability Rating (LLR) Program and Licensee Transfer Process. Directive 088 includes new tools to manage oil and gas liability which include a holistic assessment of the licensee that considers more than 40 different factors, including those listed in section 4.5 of Directive 067. The AER revised Directive 067 in early 2021 to state that the AER may consider unpaid municipal taxes and surface lease payments when assessing licensee eligibility and will reach out directly to the company for those records.

While the tools introduced in Directive 088 are a step in the right direction towards effective liability management through the life cycle of an energy project, there are still outstanding questions about the new tools, including to what extent municipal tax payments will be considered during the review of licence transfer applications and throughout the project lifecycle.

As Directive 067 does not introduce any mandatory tax payment requirements into the regulatory process, it is inadequate in addressing the intent of this resolution. RMA is continuing to advocate on this issue to the AER and Government of Alberta. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**.

### Resolution 10-20F

Weed Issues on Oil and Gas Sites in Rural Alberta

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the governments of Alberta and Canada to put in place appropriate legislation and standards to protect landowners from undue hardship as a result of oil and gas company neglect of weed control on well sites.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** RMA appreciates Alberta Energy's response outlining the *Weed Control Act* and the responsibilities of the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) and Orphan Well Association (OWA) regarding weed management. However, due to the ongoing challenges oil and gas companies are facing, many have opted to forgo weed control measures on their lease sites on both private and Crown lands. This includes companies whose assets have been assigned to the OWA, companies in receivership or bankruptcy proceedings and companies that continue to operate. While municipalities have the authority under the *Weed Control Act* to serve and enforce a notice of non-compliance, many go unresolved from not being able to find a contact person or the company refuses to comply.

Weeds can have serious negative consequences when they spread to neighboring lands as it can cause reduced crop yields. In most cases, landowners incur the cost, inconvenience and liability of managing these weed issues themselves. As stated in Alberta Energy's response the AER has limited authority over weeds and the OWA only addresses weed infestations on orphan well sites after the well has been moved to its reclamation inventory.

RMA appreciates the Farmer's Advocate Office's work helping landowners file their paperwork to apply for compensation for adverse effects, which could include compensation for weed control, under the five-year lease review provisions of the *Surface Rights Act* (Section 27).

Natural Resources Canada has not provided a response to this resolution. RMA will update members and the status of this resolution when a response is received.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** as the current legislation has no enforcement measures for weed management and the OWA and AER do not provide weed control on suspended or abandoned orphaned oil and gas sites. RMA will continue to advocate to the provincial and federal government for appropriate legislation and standards to protect landowners from undue hardship as a result of oil and gas company neglect of weed control on well sites.

## Resolution 7-19F

### Utility Distribution Rates in Rural Communities and Public Facilities

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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. In 2021, the RMA Board met with the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity. During this meeting, the Associate Minister stated that the Government of Alberta had no plans to review regulatory requirements relating to transmission and distribution rates of utility companies as it was under the mandate of the AUC.

The second part of the resolution is requesting the Government of Alberta review the requirement that public facilities are charged commercial rates and bills based on peak demand. In 2021, the AESO reached out to RMA to discuss proposed changes to the Independent System Operator (ISO) tariff, which consists of the rates, terms, and conditions that apply to persons who receive system access service from the transmission system. The AESO recovers bulk system costs based on a 12 coincident-peak (CP) methodology. Due to recent peak rate increases, 12 CP no longer incentivizes the drivers of transmission costs to adjust with changes occurring in the landscape of Alberta's electricity system. Further, the AESO has reported an increase of large industrial electricity consumers avoiding consumption during peak rate hours, which has shifted a larger portion of costs to consumers who are not necessarily able to avoid using electricity during peak times. According to the AESO, the current ISO tariff rate design should be updated to address these changes while still providing clear and stable price

signals to consumers to support effective business decisions. Even with these proposed changes to the ISO tariff.

The AESO and the AUC have not indicated that a unique rate class will be created for public facilities, or that rates will be determined on any bases other than how the customers use energy and, accordingly, drive costs for the system. The final report from the AESO is scheduled to be published in early Fall.

RMA assigns this resolution as **Intent Not Met** but will continue to participate in the AESO General Tariff Application hearing to ensure that rural concerns are being addressed. Based on the outcome of the hearing process, RMA staff will update the status of this resolution.

## Resolution 9-19F

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

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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 11-19F

### Requirement for Municipal Authority Input on Energy Resource Development Projects

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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.

The AER has indicated that municipalities will be expected to address unpaid tax concerns through the same statement of concern process. This is problematic as monitoring the AER website for approval hearings is administratively burdensome, and it is doubtful that the AER will consider a municipality's concerns about a company's tax payment record in other municipal jurisdiction as an issue that has a "direct and adverse" impact on the intervening municipality. A preferred approach is an ongoing partnership between the AER and municipalities to regularly share this information. RMA made a specific request for this type of relationship but to this point the response from the AER has not been positive, as their preference is to rely on industry self-reporting of unpaid taxes and require municipalities to participate only through the statement of concern process.

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 1-19S

### Municipal Support for the Energy Industry

*Status: Accepted*

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**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.

In 2020, funds initially budgeted for the energy war room were redirected to support the Government of Alberta's efforts to protect Albertans against the COVID-19 pandemic. At the 2020 RMA Fall Convention, the Minister of Energy stated that the energy war room was conducting an internal review to strengthen their national education and marketing campaigns related to Alberta's energy sector. The outcomes of the internal review will be implemented in 2021.

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: Intent Not Met*

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**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 operations (REO) as an activity requiring reclamation at end of life. While RMA recognizes that AEP has amended the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation, there is no requirement for an operator of a REO to provide a reclamation security. Landowners have the right to allow or deny REOs on their property and have the ability to negotiate reclamation security for activities related to REOs on their property. RMA assigns this resolution as **Intent Not Met** and will continue to work with AEP on ensuring that there is funding put in place for abandoned wind and solar energy to be reclaimed.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Resolution 5-21S

#### Preservation of Water Quality and Access to Water by Albertans

*Status: Incomplete Information*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to take proactive measures to ensure that the headwaters that supply Alberta's water basins are managed to maintain water recharge capabilities, to sustain high water quality and to provide access to sufficient water supplies for all Albertans.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** As RMA has not yet received a response to this resolution, it is assigned a status of **Incomplete Information**, and will be re-visited when a government response is received.

### Resolution 12-20F

#### Expansion of Elk Hunting for Management in Agriculture Production Areas

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that the Government of Alberta increase the number of antlerless elk draw seasons to a minimum of two per wildlife management unit (WMU) located within agricultural areas; and

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that RMA request that the Government of Alberta increase the number of antlerless elk tags allocated within WMUs that are located within agricultural areas to compensate for poor hunter harvest success.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** RMA appreciates the Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) response outlining the several management strategies currently employed to mitigate elk depredation in agricultural areas. One initiative that has been undertaken has been implementing split seasons for antlerless elk in areas affected by significant agricultural damage. The implementation of the split season increases hunting pressure throughout the season, reduces hunter density, and increases the total harvest. AEP is hoping that split seasons will result in the elk population declining to a sustainable level which in turn increase harvest success in agricultural areas. AEP's initiatives do not include increasing the number of antlerless elk draw season to a minimum of two per WMU or increasing the number of antlerless tags in WMUs. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will update the status of the resolution if there are any changes to elk hunting management.

### Resolution 15-20F

#### Security Deposits for Dispositions

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta remove the requirement for municipalities to provide a security to receive Crown land dispositions.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** RMA appreciates the Government of Alberta response that local municipalities are exempt from providing reclamation security if they are operating under an approval, registration, or code of practice, per s. 17.1 of the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation. However, this resolution is stating that municipalities are being held accountable to pay a security deposit for dispositions on Crown land. RMA staff will follow up with the sponsoring municipality to gain further context on what instances they have had to pay a security deposit and will follow up with AEP once the information is received.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will update this resolution once clarity has been received.

## Resolution 1-20S

### Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive

*Status: Accepted in Part*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to modify the Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive to minimize the administration and assessment process to reduce costs and approval times for municipalities; and**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that funds collected through the Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive be directed to environment improvement projects that have low administration fees.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) response acknowledges the challenges being faced by rural municipalities related to wetland applications and indicates that AEP is currently developing a streamlined regulatory process to reduce red tape for low-risk wetland impacts resulting from municipal road maintenance activities. RMA and its members have been actively engaging with AEP and sharing challenges rural municipalities are facing in wetland applications, and RMA is pleased to hear that those concerns have helped scope the department's work to reduce red tape for municipal road maintenance activities impacting wetlands. RMA and its members look forward to continued engagement with AEP to share ideas on red tape reduction for wetlands.

One of AEP's major initiatives is the Wetland Replacement Program (WRP) which will provide funding for approved wetland replacement projects in accordance with service agreements with municipalities. One goal of the WRP is to establish agreements with municipalities to restore and construct wetlands that will directly benefit communities and the surrounding ecosystem. AEP intends for the WRP to reduce liability and increase financial funding opportunities for municipalities by ensuring collaboration to achieve shared provincial and municipal outcomes, reducing administrative burden and liability associated with long-term *Water Act* conditions to complete permittee-responsible replacement and providing financial security to complete wetland restoration projects.

This resolution specifically asks for the Government of Alberta to modify the Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive to minimize the administration and assessment process to reduce costs and approval times for municipalities and that funds collected be directed to environment improvement projects. Although AEP's response does not directly state any modifications to the Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive, AEP's intent for the WRP is to minimize the administrative burden, liability and reduce costs for municipalities.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part** and will be re-evaluated based on the progress of the WRP.

## Resolution 4-20S

### Water and Wastewater – Laws, Regulations and Funding

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate that the governments of Canada and Alberta consider and evaluate the financial impacts that all existing and proposed laws and**

regulations governing the production and distribution of potable water and the collection, treatment and release of wastewater will have on municipalities, municipal commissions, or municipally-owned utility companies, and share this information with RMA; and

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that RMA advocate to the governments of Canada and Alberta to recognize water commissions and cooperatives and deem them eligible for funding programs; and

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that the governments of Canada and Alberta establish adequate, stable, long-term funding for all affected water and wastewater service providers which considers the rising costs of providing these services due to federal and provincial laws and regulations.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta’s response acknowledges the resource challenges rural municipalities face in delivering safe, reliable drinking water and wastewater services. Currently, the Government of Alberta administers two programs: Alberta Municipal Water/Wastewater Partnership and the Water for Life program to help finance water and wastewater infrastructure in smaller municipalities and has committed to a combined \$207 million to municipal works over the next three years.

RMA is participating on Alberta Municipalities’ Wastewater Innovation Task Force to share the rural municipal perspective on the following concerns:

- ◆ Increasingly stringent environmental regulations
- ◆ Increasing capital costs for wastewater infrastructure
- ◆ Financial burden of operating these facilities

The purpose of the taskforce is to develop innovative technologies to address these concerns that will be shared with Alberta Environment and Parks and Alberta Transportation. The taskforce is currently developing a white paper and RMA will update members on the outcomes from the taskforce.

This resolution is requesting that the Government of Alberta and Canada to recognize water commissions and cooperatives and deem them eligible for funding programs and to establish adequate, stable, long-term funding that considers the rising costs of providing water and wastewater service providers.

The Government of Alberta response indicates that due to the current fiscal reality, there are no immediate plans to change the funding model for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and RMA will continue to advocate for the Government of Alberta and Canada to establish adequate, stable, long-term funding for water and wastewater service providers that considers the rising costs of providing services.

## **Resolution 4-19F**

### **Alberta Environment and Parks Water and Wastewater Facility and Landfill Approvals**

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**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.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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 13-19F

### Provincial Extended Producer Responsibility Regulations

*Status: Accepted*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** RMA appreciates the Government of Alberta's commitment to working with external stakeholders to enhance provincial recycling programs that work for all Albertans. RMA 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 Municipalities (Abmunis), 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.

In 2021, Alberta Environment and Parks announced the beginning of consultations with municipalities and industry leaders to develop an EPR program. The RMA participated in these engagement sessions and 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. In a recent meeting, the Minister of Environment and Parks indicated a goal of implementing an EPR system by mid-2022.

RMA has assigned this resolution a status of **Accepted** and continues 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 19-19F

### Water Security in Southern Alberta

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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 4-19S

### Bighorn Country Proposal Consultation

*Status: Accepted in Principle*

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**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*

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**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*

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**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 2022 Budget, the Government of Alberta decreased Water for Life funding to \$37.3 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*

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**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.

## HEALTH AND SENIORS

### Resolution ER2-20S

#### New Physician Funding Framework

*Status: Accepted in Principle*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to reengage in negotiations with the Alberta Medical Association to mutually arrive at a new master agreement that ensures continued timely access to healthcare for all rural Albertans.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** RMA remains engaged in issues regarding access to healthcare for rural Albertans, and is closely following the relationship between Alberta Health and the Alberta Medical Association. The Alberta Medical Association and Alberta Health did return to negotiations. However, Alberta Medical Association members voted to reject the newly proposed master agreement. RMA understands that negotiations are expected to continue in the future. As a result of renewed negotiations, but lacking a new master agreement, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Principle**.

### Resolution ER3-20S

#### Housing Management Body Compliance Requirements During Pandemic Response

*Status: Accepted in Part*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request the Government of Alberta to provide funding to Alberta housing management bodies (HMBs) and continuing care operators (CCOs) in support of front-line workers for the additional labour, personal protective equipment and operational supplies and lost revenues due to complying with COVID-19 pandemic directives and orders; and**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA request the Government of Alberta to immediately provide a plan for emergency supply of labour, personal protective equipment and operational supplies to Alberta HMBs and CCOs in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak at a facility in Alberta.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response indicates that specific emergency provincial funding was provided to HMBs and CCOs beginning on June 8, 2020 to allow for the purchase of PPE and other related equipment. Additionally, the response indicates that AHS has supplied PPE to HMBs and contracted CCOs at no cost. This, combined with the two-dollar-per-hour wage subsidy to better support employees during this time, effectively addresses the resolution's first operative clause.

The resolution response also indicates that the AHS Coordinated COVID-19 Response Team has been made available to assist HMBs and CCOs in procuring and deploying PPE.

The resolution response does not indicate that the Government of Alberta has developed an emergency response plan to address a breakout of COVID-19 at a facility in Alberta. Ensuring both the province and facility operators and staff are prepared to recognize and mitigate the impacts of a breakout is critical to supporting the safety of residents, staff and the broader community. As the COVID-19 pandemic subsides, the Government of Alberta has begun introducing plans for the ongoing management of COVID-19, including outbreak response plans. RMA will continue to monitor for updates. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Part**.

## Resolution 20-19F

### Policies for Supporting Community Hospice Associations

*Status: Accepted in Principle*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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 12-19S

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

*Status: Accepted in Part*

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**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.

## MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

### Resolution 2-20F

#### Blue-Ribbon Panel to Review Unpaid Taxes Owed by Oil and Gas Companies

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to appoint an independent panel of experts to review unpaid property taxes owed by oil and gas companies and its impact on rural municipalities; and**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the panel provide the Government of Alberta and rural municipalities with implementable recommendations related to the recovery of property taxes owed by oil and gas companies.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response makes no reference to the specific request made in the resolution: that the province appoint an independent panel of experts to review the issue of unpaid municipal property taxes by oil and gas companies. Although the Government of Alberta recently enacted amendments to the *Municipal Government Act* to allow municipalities to place special liens to recover unpaid taxes on oil and gas properties, no panel or working group was formed to address the broader issue of unpaid property taxes.

The Government of Alberta has demonstrated its recent willingness to conduct independent reviews, panels, and inquiries on issues that it deems significant, including the Alberta Health Services review, the COVID-19 response review, the Fair Deal Panel, and the Inquiry into Anti-Alberta Energy Campaigns. Given the province's frequent use of independent reviews, it is disappointing that the Government of Alberta response to resolution 2-20F does not even reference the specific request in the resolution and does not explain why an independent review of this issue may not be the province's preferred approach. Meanwhile, Alberta's rural municipalities face approximately \$253 million in unpaid taxes based on a January 2022 RMA member survey, suggesting that this issue is extremely important for rural viability.

This is an issue requiring the Government of Alberta to hold industry accountable for meeting their obligations. A panel to better understand the root of the issue and how municipalities, Alberta Municipal Affairs, the Alberta Energy Regulator, and other bodies could play a role in creating such accountability would be an important step in the right direction.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to emphasize the importance of this issue.

### Resolution 4-20F

#### Provincial Policing Costs Levy – Designate as a Requisition

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to amend section 326(1)(a) of the *Municipal Government Act* by designating the provincial policing costs levy as a requisition to allow municipalities to show separately on their property tax notices the tax rate imposed to raise the revenue required for the provincial policing costs levy.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response indicates that the request in the resolution will be considered when the finance provisions of the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) are reviewed in 2021 or 2022. The Government of Alberta's response that designating the police costing levy as a requisition may create additional red tape is unclear, as the current levy process already requires

municipalities to pay the province directly for police services on a regular basis, similar to a requisition process. Any minor administrative challenges would be more than offset by the improved transparency that allowing policing costs to be displayed on property tax notices would provide for municipal taxpayers.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will advocate on this issue during the upcoming review of the finance provisions of the MGA.

## Resolution 17-20F

### Rural Small Business Properties Assessment Sub-Classes Amendment

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to amend the Matters Relating to Assessment Sub-Classes Regulation to allow a tax rate differential of up to 50% between the “small business property” and “other non-residential property” sub-classes.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** While RMA appreciates the tools currently in the *Municipal Government Act* that allow municipalities to modify tax rates for certain non-residential properties, this resolution specifically requests an amendment to the Matters Relating to Assessment Sub-Classes Regulation, which is not considered in the Government of Alberta response.

The resolution request would be particularly helpful for municipalities with large oil and gas properties within their boundaries, as the current 75% tax rate differential allowance may not allow for adequate tax equity between large industrial properties and small commercial properties taxed under the same rate class. While this issue could potentially be addressed through MGA sections 347 or 364.2, neither appear to be designed for a permanent, broad tax rate differential within a rate class, and applying them in this way may result in increased red tape and complexity in the taxation process.

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

## Resolution 2-20S

### Additional Depreciation of Machinery and Equipment Property (Schedule D)

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate for the Government of Alberta to take steps to ensure that assessments for Machinery and Equipment are not adjusted under Schedule D of the Alberta Machinery & Equipment Assessment Minister’s Guidelines on the basis of industry-wide economic conditions; and**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate for the Government of Alberta to amend Schedule D of the Alberta Machinery & Equipment Assessment Minister’s Guidelines to confirm the status of the current policy that additional depreciation under Schedule D is not available on the basis of industry-wide economic conditions; and**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate for the Government of Alberta to not consider any changes to the Alberta Machinery & Equipment Assessment Minister’s Guidelines without full consultation and consideration of the impact of any changes on all Alberta taxpayers.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** In 2020, the Government of Alberta undertook a review of the assessment model for regulated oil and gas properties. The review process included consideration of changes to how Schedule

D depreciation is applied to various property types, including a shift away from the use of additional (Schedule D) depreciation in some proposed scenarios.

Following the review, the Minister of Municipal Affairs made temporary adjustments to the assessment model, which included a further reduction in the assessment value of low producing wells through changes to Schedule D of the Alberta Machinery & Equipment Assessment Minister's Guidelines. This change is intended to reduce costs of oil and gas companies responsible for low-producing wells due to the broader economic challenges currently facing the industry, which is in direct opposition to the request in the first operative clause of the resolution.

Recently, Canadian Natural Resources Limited (CNRL) launched a mass appeal of the 2018 and 2019 assessment of its machinery and equipment (M&E) properties in 52 rural municipalities based on the argument that the assessment should be reduced under Schedule D depreciation due to general economic circumstances impacting the productivity and profitability of the properties. The Land and Property Rights Tribunal (LPRT) rejected CNRL's complaints related to M&E properties. CNRL has appealed the LPRT decision to the Court of Queen's Bench, and the appeal is expected to be heard in early 2023. Regardless of the decision made on the appeal, the complaint process has resulted in significant costs for the province and some impacted municipalities, and demonstrates the risks of the vague language currently found in Schedule D. During the upcoming assessment model review scheduled to begin in 2022, RMA plans to continue calling for increased clarity within Schedule D. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

## **Resolution 1-19F**

### **Priority of Unpaid Property Taxes on Linear Property**

*Status: Accepted in Part*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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. In June 2021, Alberta Municipal Affairs and Alberta Energy reached out to RMA for legislative suggestions to address this issue. RMA’s submission included recommendations contained in this resolution, as well as others. At this point, RMA has not received a response from the Government of Alberta or an indication of possible next steps.

In terms of the first operative clause, 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 2022 RMA member survey indicated that rural municipalities face \$253 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.

Following an October 2020 announcement by the Minister of Municipal Affairs of several short-term oil and gas property assessment changes intended to support industry competitiveness, former RMA President Al Kemmere stated in a media article (<https://calgaryherald.com/opinion/columnists/varcoe-after-providing-tax-relief-to-oilpatch-province-must-tackle-unpaid-taxes-to-municipalities>) that “unpaid taxes is our number one concern. It has got some of our member municipalities on the cusp of not being able to pay their bills.” In the same article, industry organizations also acknowledged the seriousness of the issue, with an Explorers and Producers Association of Canada representative stating that “from an oil and gas perspective, property taxes have to be paid. We understand there’s a problem.” The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers stated that “the fix is to find a path, some tool, that would enable government to compel companies to pay.”

In 2022, the Government of Alberta passed Bill 77: *Municipal Government (Restoring Tax Accountability) Amendment Act, 2021*, intended to clarify that municipalities can apply special lien powers found in the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) to linear property. Bill 77 does the following:

- ◆ Confirms that municipalities are secured creditors for unpaid taxes on linear property.
- ◆ Clarifies that both the owner and operator are responsible for tax payment.
- ◆ Clarifies that a special lien on all assessable property within a municipality exists once a company or owner is in arrears.
- ◆ Retroactively applies to all existing arrears owed to a municipality.

It is important to note that Bill 77 is not a complete solution to the issue if unpaid oil and gas property taxes, as it will likely only address possible tax recovery during insolvency proceedings, and does little to address tax recovery from still-operating companies. However, Bill 77 does address all four specific legislative requests made in the third operative clause of the resolution:

- ◆ It adds s. 348.1 to the MGA to clarify that all assessable property is subject to special lien provisions when the property taxes are in arrears.
- ◆ It provides municipalities with improved enforcement powers, including those requested in the operative clause.
- ◆ It applies the amendments retroactively.

As a result of Bill 77, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part**, as the unfunded abandonment issue (operative clause #2) is ongoing.

## Resolution 6-19F

### Municipal Recourse for Solvent Companies Choosing Not to Pay Taxes

*Status: Accepted*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** In April 2021, the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) released a new edition of Directive 067: Eligibility Requirements for Acquiring and Holding Energy Licences and Approvals. The revised version of Directive 067 added outstanding debts owed for municipal taxes as a factor used by the AER to determine “unreasonable risk” for an energy licence applicant. Under Directive 067, the AER could deny a company’s application to be eligible to hold energy licences due to unpaid taxes, which was not previously the case.

While the changes to Directive 067 represent a crucial step forward in how oil and gas companies may be held accountable for non-payment of property taxes, RMA continues to work with AER to understand how the addition to Directive 067 will be implemented. Outstanding questions include how unpaid tax information will be gathered and updated and the extent to which unpaid taxes will be weighed in relation to other risk factors when assessing a company.

Following RMA’s 2022 member survey indicating that the total amount of unpaid oil and gas property taxes facing municipalities has increased to \$253 million, RMA has continued to push the Government of Alberta and the AER to act on this issue and to ensure the industry is properly regulated to meet its environmental, social and governance commitments and that companies are compelled to act as responsible corporate citizens.

Despite these outstanding questions and the lack of impact of Directive 067 to this point, the changes to Directive 067 meet the intent of the resolution. The resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

## Resolution 12-19F

### Libraries Act Review and Rural Library Services

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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.

In June 2021, Alberta Municipal Affairs introduced a plan for a targeted red tape reduction-focused review of the *Libraries Act*, with a focus in four specific areas, including the current requirement that library boards serving a population above 10,000 hire at least one professional librarian. Consultation on this issue took place in late 2021, and changes to the Act have not yet been announced.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will revisit this resolution based on the outcome of the *Libraries Act* review.

## Resolution 16-19F

### GST for Grants and Subsidies Interpretation

*Status: Accepted in Part*

**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response indicates a concern with the impact that the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) interpretation 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 Alberta Municipalities 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.

In early 2022, the CRA informed the Town of Peace River that their objection to the CRA's taxation of their intermunicipal agreement was successful. While this is a positive development, a formal change to policy is still lacking, meaning that taxes could still be assessed to similar agreements on a case-by-case basis.

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 8-19S

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

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**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**.

## PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

### Resolution 3-21S

#### Personal Cannabis Production for Medical Use

*Status: Incomplete Information*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta collaborate with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to advocate to Health Canada that confirmation of municipal compliance for personal medical cannabis production facilities be required for existing license holders, and prior to approval for all future license applicants.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** As RMA has not yet received a response to this resolution, it is assigned a status of **Incomplete Information**, and will be re-visited when a government response is received.

### Resolution 6-21S

#### National Flood Insurance Strategy and Community Resiliency Advocacy

*Status: Accepted in Part*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate for the Government of Alberta to participate in and contribute to the work of the National Task Force on Flood Insurance and Relocation;

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that the Government of Alberta's participation on the National Task Force on Flood Insurance and Relocation focus on advocating for the development of a national high-risk residential flood insurance program and sustainable, long-term funding for provinces, Indigenous communities and municipalities for flood mitigation programs, projects and initiatives that increase overall community resiliency.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response indicates that the Alberta Emergency Management Agency is contributing to the Flood Insurance and Relocation Project's (FIRP) Provincial/Territorial Task Team. The FIRP is a low-cost national flood insurance plan designed to protect homeowners at high risk of flooding and without adequate insurance protection. The program is also intended to enable the development of a national action plan on flooding, which supports homeowners susceptible to repeat flooding with potential relocation. The core mandate of the FIRP is to create a national insurance plan in Canada; one that seeks to explore options for low-cost residential flood insurance to residents of high-risk areas. The mandate commitment of the FIRP, according to Public Safety Canada, will be fulfilled by creating a Canada-led task force on flood insurance and relocation. The task force would primarily consist of representatives from federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as representatives from the insurance industry, Indigenous Services, including the Insurance Bureau of Canada. This advisory body is intended to facilitate the creation of a report that would provide a deeper understanding on how to manage, mitigate, and prepare for all sorts of hazardous events, with flooding primarily on the list. A final report on the task force findings is expected in the spring of 2022.

While the GOA's participation in the FIRP is a positive, the response does not specify the Government of Alberta's position in relation to the resolution's focus: advocacy for a national high-risk residential flood insurance program, and long-term funding for flood mitigation programs, project and initiatives.

In March 2022, the Government of Canada announced that the Task Team’s work was nearly complete and would culminate with the release of a report outlining recommendations for a new national flood insurance program later in 2022.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Part**, and RMA will follow up with the Government of Alberta to better understand their priorities in relation to FIRP.

## Resolution 7-20F

### Amendments to *Municipal Government Act* Section 619

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to amend Section 619 of the *Municipal Government Act* to clearly state that the Natural Resources Conservation Board, the Energy Resources Conservation Board, the Alberta Energy Regulator, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board or the Alberta Utilities Commission must consider municipal statutory land use planning related to the protection of productive agricultural lands when making decisions on licenses, permits, approvals and other authorizations under their jurisdiction.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response does not indicate a willingness to amend section 619 of the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) to ensure that provincial regulatory bodies must consider a project’s impact on agricultural lands when making decisions on licenses, permits, approvals and other authorizations under their jurisdiction. Additionally, recent changes to the MGA under Bill 48: *Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020 (No. 2)* have resulted in appeals of local development and subdivision decisions made on projects regulated under section 619 being sent to the Land and Property Rights Tribunal (formerly the Municipal Government Board), rather than the local subdivision and development appeal board. This further erodes the ability of local land use issues (including impacts on agricultural lands) from being considered in relation to approvals under section 619.

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

## Resolution 13-20F

### Provincial Government Disaster Recovery Program Payments

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate that the Government of Alberta review its Disaster Recovery Program processes to ensure municipalities receive payments within a defined timeline for resources deployed to assist during regional disasters.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response indicates that the current Disaster Recovery Program (DRP) municipal reimbursement process does allow for advance payment of municipal costs if certain conditions are met. However, the resolution indicates that the process for the reimbursement of routine municipal claims under the DRP is unnecessarily lengthy and places an unfair financial burden on municipalities.

The current Disaster Assistance Guidelines do not appear to include any timelines by which DRP support funds will be paid out to municipalities, aside from section 2.10, which states that “final payments will be made based on receipt and review of all documents submitted by the applicant prior to the program closure.” RMA appreciates that the time needed to review documents will depend on the scope and complexity of the application. However, a complete lack of timeline (even of a “goal” or “benchmark”

time for reimbursement) reflects a lack of transparency and accountability on the part of the Government of Alberta, and places municipalities into a challenging state of uncertainty.

March 2021 changes to the Disaster Recovery Program introduced a 90/10 cost-sharing split between the Government of Alberta and municipalities. This change adds financial pressures onto municipalities in relation to disaster recovery costs and makes the timely payment of the provincial portion of costs even more important. Unfortunately, no changes were made to the payment timelines.

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

## Resolution 16-20F

### Federal and Provincial Disaster Support

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta for continued Disaster Recovery Program funding to support community resilience and enable the relocation of affected property owners where re-construction is impractical or inadvisable.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** In March 2021, the Government of Alberta amended the terms of the Disaster Recovery Program to introduce a 90/10 provincial/municipal cost share for all eligible DRP costs. According to the initial Alberta Municipal Affairs response to this resolution, DRP-eligible costs associated with 2020 spring flooding costs across the province totalled \$147 million, meaning that were the 90/10 cost share introduced for the 2020 year, impacted municipalities would have been responsible for a combined \$14.7 million in unanticipated costs.

These changes place a significant burden on municipalities to financially plan for disaster events that are impossible to predict in terms of their location, frequency or severity, and place an additional financial burden onto municipalities that are already adapting to downloads in many different areas.

Given the major impacts this change may have on municipalities, RMA is disappointed that the change was announced with no consultation or transition period, placing municipalities in a very difficult position to prepare for the 2021 flood and wildfire season.

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

## Resolution 18-20F

### Municipal Decision-making on Fire Bans in Hamlets Within Forest Protection Area

*Status: Accepted*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to amend necessary legislation (including the *Municipal Government Act* and/or the *Forest and Prairie Protection Act*) to clarify that councils of municipal districts and specialized municipalities may make decisions on fire bans in hamlets within the Forest Protection Area.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** RMA appreciates the support of Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development (AAFRED) has invited RMA to participate in consultations to amend legislation to allow municipalities to make decisions on fire bans in hamlets within the Forest Protection Area. However, RMA is concerned that AAFRED also indicated support for municipalities taking on a greater degree of responsibility for fire suppression within these hamlets. As local decision makers, RMA members are well positioned to understand local conditions, placing them in a position to make informed decisions

about fire bans within hamlets. However, RMA members are not in a financial position to increase their service levels regarding fire management in hamlets without support from the Government of Alberta.

Following consultation with AAFRED and discussion on the possible unintended consequences of providing municipalities with more authorities around fire bans in hamlets, AAFRED has agreed to work with individual municipalities interested in taking on this authority on a case-by-case basis rather than make blanket legislative changes.

Although the resolution technically requests legislative changes, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted**, as AAFRED worked with RMA and municipalities to implement a solution that will meet the intent of the resolution while limiting the likelihood of unintended consequences for municipalities.

## Resolution ER1-19F

### Dissolution of Mandatory Growth Management Boards

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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.

In late 2020, the Government of Alberta passed Bill 48: *Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020 (No. 2)*. Bill 48 included several changes to the sections of the *Municipal Government Act* establishing the requirements for GMBs. The majority of changes made to the GMB structure through Bill 48 removed specific requirements related to the development and approval of growth plans, the ability of a GMB to require a member to cease an action deemed inconsistent with a growth plan, and other areas. Most of the areas removed may be addressed through regulations, as Bill 48 also alters the Minister's

regulation-making power by allowing the Minister to make regulations relating to areas such as membership and voting rights, operations and management, consistency with municipal plans and bylaws at any time, whereas the MGA previously allowed such regulations to be made only when a GMB was established. While broadening the Minister’s regulation-making power could result in some of the changes requested in resolution ER1-19F being implemented for existing GMBs, there is no indication at this time that any changes to the current operations will take place.

In 2021, RMA has heard from several members participating in the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board (CMRB) that the flawed voting and governance structure is leading to serious consequences for rural land use planning in the region through the repeated vetoing of rural plans by urban CMRB participants, despite the fact that they are in compliance with CMRB requirements. Rural CMRB participants have also indicated serious concerns that the CMRB growth plan has been finalized and submitted to the Minister despite opposition from rural CMRB members, and that if implemented, the Growth Plan will significantly reduce the autonomy of rural CMRB members to make local land use planning and growth decisions.

In 2022, the Minister of Municipal Affairs refined the membership of the CMRB, removing Wheatland County and the Town of Strathmore due to their distance from Calgary, small populations, and the costs associated with members. While reducing the size of the CMRB is a step in the right direction, it does not address the significant governance issues that continue to impact remaining rural members of both GMBs.

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

## POLICING AND RURAL CRIME

### Resolution 2-21S

#### Police Act Review

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to undertake further and direct consultation with rural municipalities on the proposed *Police Act* changes and the future of policing in Alberta.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** As RMA has not yet received a response to this resolution, it is assigned a status of **Incomplete Information**, and will be re-visited when a government response is received.

### Resolution 1-20F

#### Police Funding Model Freeze

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to freeze municipal contributions under the police funding model at no greater than 10% of the total policing costs under the Provincial Police Services Agreement (PPSA) until a corporate review of the PPSA and the overall organizational structure, efficiency and effectiveness of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) policing service has been completed and the review made available to all municipalities in Alberta; and

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that RMA advocate to the Government of Alberta that all monies collected from the police funding model remain in the Rural Municipalities of Alberta district from which they were collected.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response indicates that the implementation of the Police Funding Model (PFM) will contribute to improved policing service levels in rural Alberta, both through an increase in frontline police presence in rural municipalities, as well as through enhanced capacity in specialized policing service areas such as crime reduction units.

Although this may be the case, the resolution requests a fulsome and transparent review of current RCMP policing services under the Provincial Police Services Agreement prior to implementing the PFM and requiring rural and small urban municipalities to increase their contributions to frontline policing. While adding officers to rural detachments and specialized units is likely to improve rural police service levels to some degree, RMA members have expressed concern about the lack of transparency as to how, where and to what extent service levels will be improved. This concern is reflected in resolution 1-20F and unfortunately not addressed in the government response. The focus of the resolution is on the need for the Government of Alberta to determine service level baselines and a concrete and measurable approach to where and how service levels will be improved prior to requiring rural and small urban municipalities to collectively commit hundreds of millions of dollars to policing.

Throughout the PFM 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. Currently, the RCMP shares routine updates on

staffing increases linked to the PFM. While these updates are appreciated, they continue to have no linkage to any plan or strategy regarding service levels in specific communities.

In recent discussions with the Alberta Police Interim Advisory Board, the RCMP has indicated that work is underway to develop performance metrics to evaluate the impacts of new policing resources added under the PFM, and that their development may include input from RMA and other stakeholders. This is a positive development and RMA looks forward to supporting the development of the performance metrics.

RMA is also aware of likely upcoming policing cost increases linked to the recently signed collective bargaining agreement between the Government of Canada and the National Police Federation (NPF), which represents 19,000 RCMP officers below the rank of “Inspector.” While the exact financial implications of the agreement are not currently known, it is expected to include a retroactive pay increase for NPF members. It is crucial that this pay increase not be downloaded onto municipalities that receive RCMP policing under the Provincial Police Services Agreement, as these municipalities had no say into the negotiation of the agreement and are already facing major cost increases due to the new police funding model.

The Government response also does not reference the resolution’s request that proceeds collected through the model be reinvested into the contributing RMA district. The PFM model heavily relies on equalized assessment to determine municipal contribution requirements. As equalized assessment has little link to criminal activity and other factors that determine required police service levels, it is especially important that municipalities contributing high amounts due to their equalized assessment have those contributions reinvested into policing services within their regions, rather than used to subsidize policing in a completely different region of the province.

Finally, the Government reference to the transition study being conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Canada on a possible Alberta provincial police service appears to misunderstand the intent of the resolution. The request for a full study into current RCMP service levels and effectiveness is in relation for the need for the Government of Alberta to have baseline data and a specific plan for improving current RCMP services prior to imposing the PFM, and is unrelated to replacing the RCMP with another police service provider.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to advocate for improved planning and information sharing in relation to the PFM.

## **Resolution 2-19F**

### **Government of Alberta's Police Costing Test Model**

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response indicates that adequate consultation occurred with municipal stakeholders during the development of the police costing mode 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 with their own police forces 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. More recently, the RCMP has provided monthly staffing updates to the Alberta Police Interim Advisory Board. As of December 2020, 76 new regular member positions and 57 public service employee positions have been linked to the costing model and are in the process of being filled, both in rural detachments and in specialized or centralized units. While this progress is a positive step, municipalities have not had a say in determining how these resources are allocated.
- 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 calls into question 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 10-19F

### Community Peace Officer Access to RCMP Radio Channels

*Status: Accepted in Principle*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** In 2020, the Government of Alberta completed a pilot project involving the use of the Alberta First Responder Radio Communications System (AFRRCS) to allow shared radio communications between RCMP and community peace officers (CPOs). The pilot involved six municipalities (Town of Okotoks, County of Grande Prairie, City of Grande Prairie, City of Red Deer, Foothills County and Clearwater County). According to the Government of Alberta, the pilot was successful, and plans are in place to enact the permanent use of AFRRCS for RCMP/CPO communications in the six pilot municipalities, as well as expand the option of using AFRRCS for RCMP/CPO communications in all municipalities in the province.

At this point, the Government of Alberta and RCMP are developing the process for making this option available, and hope to provide municipalities with detailed implementation information, including technology requirements, costs, etc. at some point in 2021. RMA is seeking an update on this work.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Principle** and will be re-assessed based on the roll-out of enhanced RCMP/CPO communication through AFRRCS.

## RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Resolution 5-20S

#### Regional Economic Development Alliances Continued Provincial Funding

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate that the Government of Alberta enter into a five-year contract with the existing nine Regional Economic Development Alliances (REDAs) at an equivalent or higher funding arrangement as was in effect in the previous agreement; and**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA request that the Government of Alberta enter into meaningful discussions with REDA chairs to ensure long-term sustainability of REDAs.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** While the Government of Alberta response indicates the important role that regional economic development alliances (REDAs) play in Alberta's economic growth, RMA is concerned with the indication that REDA funding will be reduced due to the province's fiscal challenges. REDAs play a crucial role in providing promotion and support for regional investment in the province and reducing their funding may provide the province with modest short-term fiscal relief but will likely result in reduced long-term investment and economic growth in rural areas.

In further follow-up correspondence on this issue, Alberta Jobs, Economy and Innovation (formerly Alberta Economic Development, Trade and Tourism) indicate that new three-year funding arrangements (2020-22) are being completed at a reduced rate from previous agreements. This is concerning as the resolution requests five-year funding arrangements at a level equivalent or higher than previous levels. Additionally, the supplementary correspondence indicated no plan to meet directly with the chairs of each REDA.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to advocate for adequate funding for REDAs, and for increased collaboration between the Government of Alberta and REDA chairs.

### Resolution 6-20S

#### Economic State of Crisis

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the governments of Alberta and Canada to declare an economic state of crisis and work with all levels of government to develop and enact policies designed to secure investment and employment in the energy and agricultural sectors.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Alberta Energy response indicates that the Ministry is working on developing a provincial environmental, social and governance (ESG) strategy that will be aimed at strengthening and promoting Alberta's position as a responsible energy producer and attracting investment to its energy sector. In addition, Alberta Energy has been reducing red tape in the energy sector by repealing unnecessary and outdated regulations and legislation and expanding the Orphan Well Association's (OWA) powers to better manage and accelerate their clean-up of wells and sites. RMA appreciates Alberta Energy's efforts to attract and secure investment with these initiatives, it is too early to determine whether these efforts will attract investment to Alberta. The RMA will continue to monitor these initiatives and update members on their status.

Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development's responses also include encouraging initiatives to support the growth of the province's agriculture industry.

Although the investment and growth strategies and supports identified in the Government of Alberta's response is an encouraging step toward supporting the province's economic recovery, the response makes no reference to declaring the economic state of emergency referenced in the operative clause of the resolution, or of working with the Government of Canada to encourage increased investment and growth in Alberta's energy and agriculture sectors.

Further follow-up correspondence on this issue from Alberta Jobs, Economy and Innovation (formerly Alberta Economic Development, Trade and Tourism) also highlights collaborative provincial-federal efforts to support Alberta's economic recovery, including internationally-focused attempts to define and defend Alberta's environmental, social and governance standards across all sectors as a means to attract international investment to the province, as well as matching levels of municipally-focused funding that will indirectly support the agriculture and oil and gas industries by supporting Alberta's infrastructure.

As the provincial responses do not indicate a plan to declare a specific economic state of crisis, and RMA has not yet received a response from the Government of Canada, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

## TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### Resolution 15-19F

#### Provincial Highway Access and Setback Authority

*Status: Accepted in Principle*

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**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.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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.

While Alberta Transportation is not delegating the approval of permits in highway control zones to municipalities, they have engaged RMA in a consultation to develop a framework for highway vicinity management agreements (HVMAs). HVMAs would be an enabling tool that would allow municipalities the option to exempt certain types of developments within highway control zones from Alberta Transportation approval, while not limiting the authority of municipalities to issue municipal development permits. Several RMA members have volunteered as pilot municipalities to test the HVMA process. Alberta Transportation is working with the municipalities directly. RMA staff reached out to Alberta Transportation to learn if a date for HVMAs has been formalized. Alberta Transportation indicated that they have not yet completed any HVMAs but are targeting finalizing some by spring 2022.

As a result, this resolution is assigned the status of **Accepted in Principle**.

### Resolution 17-19F

#### Airports Capital Assistance Program Funding for Regional Airports in Canada

*Status: Incomplete Information*

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**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.

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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 3-19S

#### Light Weight Concrete Bridge Girders

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**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.

## OTHER

### Resolution 5-20F

#### Legislated Notice Requirement

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate that the Government of Alberta amend the *Municipal Government Act* to provide a mandatory notice period of one year before implementing any action that will have the specific and direct effect of decreasing revenue or increasing required expenditures for municipalities.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response does not indicate a willingness to amend the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) to provide municipalities with one year notice prior to any legislative change impacting municipal revenue. In fact, the response does not indicate any willingness to collaborate with RMA or its members to improve on the current consultation process, which is often inconsistent, ad hoc, and lacking adequate time for associations and municipalities to develop comprehensive positions on the issues being addressed.

The example of effective consultation provided in the Government of Alberta's response (changes to the planning and development provisions in the MGA) was actually quite challenging for RMA, as limited time was provided for participating associations to reach out to members, and specific proposed changes based on the request of the development industry (most of which would have the impact of reducing or narrowing municipal land use planning powers) formed the basis of the consultation. Similar challenges characterized the recent assessment model review, as municipal participants had no choice but to push back against four different proposed changes to how oil and gas wells were assessed, all of which would have reduced municipal revenues to various extents. Despite the massive implications that the changes being considered would have had on rural and small urban municipalities, RMA and AUMA were not permitted to inform their members of the changes being considered or solicit member input until the review was concluded.

RMA appreciates that due to the fast pace and unpredictable nature of government, all consultations may not be able to follow an identical process. However, this resolution suggests that RMA members are concerned with the province's current approach to consultation, and even if a legislated one-year notice period is not being considered, the Government of Alberta needs to work with RMA and its members to improve the consultation process to ensure the municipal voice is heard. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to advocate on this issue.

### Resolution 6-20F

#### Government of Alberta Embargoed Committee Work

*Status: Intent Not Met*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to amend its policy development processes for embargoed committee work to ensure that organizations that represent municipal governments can share information and seek input from their member municipalities during the committee process.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** The Government of Alberta response indicates that the province does not currently have a formal process for determining when an embargoed process is required and have no plans to do so. As RMA members are concerned with the current arbitrary nature of when consultations are embargoed, and the lack of ability for organizations such as RMA to engage their members on issues

that have been embargoed, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and RMA will continue to emphasize the need for member updates and engagement in future embargoed consultation processes.

## **Resolution 5-19F** Landowners' Rights

*Status: Intent Not Met*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** 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 8-19F** Opportunity for Improvement in FCM Representation of Rural Issues and Western Perspectives

*Status: Incomplete Information*

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**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.**

**DEVELOPMENTS:** RMA is represented on FCM's Standing Committee on Conference Planning by Cypress County Councillor Robin Kurpjewit, who provides 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.

The 2020 conference was cancelled, and the 2021 conference was held virtually. Programming details for the 2022 conference, to be held in Regina, are not yet known.

This resolution is currently assigned a status of **Incomplete Information**.

## **Resolution 10-19S**

Strategic Direction for the RMA

*To Status: Accepted*

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**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**.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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

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