



RMA
RURAL MUNICIPALITIES
of ALBERTA

RMA Advocacy Report Card

Fall 2022



RMA Advocacy Report Card: Fall 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 spring 2022 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.

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

Section 1: Government Responses to Spring 2022 Resolutions

RMA recently received responses to the resolutions adopted at the spring 2022 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 |
|---------|--|------------------------|
| 2-22S | Negative Impact of Carbon Tax on Rural Albertans | Intent Not Met |
| 3-22S | Attraction and Retention of Veterinarians to Rural Veterinary Practice | Accepted In Principle |
| 4-22S | Continued Support for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Alberta | Intent Not Met |
| 6-22S | Responsiveness of Service Delivery by Quasi-independent Agencies in Alberta | Incomplete Information |
| 7-22S | Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) Report Funding Recommendations | Accepted |
| 8-22S | Reversing Changes to Aerodrome Standards Implemented by Transport Canada | Intent Not Met |
| ER1-22S | Alberta Energy Regulator Action to Require Oil and Gas Companies to Pay Municipal Property Taxes | Incomplete Information |

Resolution 2-22S

Negative Impact of Carbon Tax on Rural Albertans

Northern Sunrise County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Environment and Climate Change Canada**

WHEREAS the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (the Act) received Royal Assent and came into force on June 21, 2018; and

WHEREAS the Act is commonly referred to as the “carbon tax”; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta challenged the constitutionality of the carbon tax to the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC), and the SCC determined the carbon tax to be constitutional; and

WHEREAS the 2016 Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change: Canada’s Plan to Address Climate Change and Grow the Economy recognized the need to avoid carbon pricing that creates a disproportionate burden on vulnerable groups and Indigenous peoples; and

WHEREAS Alberta’s Court of Appeal recognized in its decision in Reference re Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, 2020 ABCA 74 that the Act does not take into account regional differences in terms of inclemency of weather, longer travel distances for work and transport of goods, and the sparseness of population (which leads to incrementally higher costs for transportation); and

WHEREAS rural Albertans need to heat their homes during the long winter months and therefore cannot freely choose to reduce their carbon footprint in this way; and

WHEREAS rural Albertans do not have access to public transportation comparable to Albertans in urban centers, and therefore are forced to pay higher taxes by using more fuel to travel; and

WHEREAS the carbon tax rate will rise to \$50 per ton by April 2022 and will continue to rise \$15 per ton every April until reaching \$170 by 2030; and

WHEREAS utility costs are becoming disproportionately unaffordable for rural residents as compared to urban residents in Alberta due to a myriad of factors, including the carbon tax; and

WHEREAS no federal, provincial, or municipal government has collected analysis or data to determine the impact of the carbon tax on the livelihoods of rural Albertans; and

WHEREAS such analysis is required to understand the impacts and challenges created by the carbon tax on rural residents in Alberta;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) conduct a rural impact analysis on the federal carbon pollution pricing system to determine how the system is negatively impacting rural Albertans and rural municipalities and share the analysis with the governments of Alberta and Canada; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA advocate to the Government of Canada for the amendment to the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act to halt carbon tax increases on fuel.

Government Response

Not yet received.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

While RMA has not yet received a response from the Government of Canada, RMA has begun work on an economic impact analysis. This work will include both a report detailing the results of the research and a webinar to work through the results with members. The report and webinar are expected to be completed in early 2023. At this point, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** pending the completion of the impact analysis and a response to the resolution from the Government of Canada.

Resolution 3-22S

Attraction and Retention of Veterinarians to Rural Veterinary Practice

Mountain View County

Carried

► ***Advocacy Target: Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, Alberta Advanced Education, University of Calgary Veterinary Medicine Faculty***

WHEREAS over the past 30 years increasing demand in Alberta for rural based veterinary medical professionals (veterinarians and veterinary technologists) combined with most veterinary students choosing urban centered careers has created a labour shortage that has reached a crisis level; and

WHEREAS veterinary medicine is critical to rural Alberta's economy, rural community sustainability and quality of life via its contributions to agriculture, food safety, and animal health and welfare; and

WHEREAS rural veterinary practices are located outside of major urban centers and provide services to four common domestic species (Bovine, Equine, Canine and Feline); and

WHEREAS students choosing to locate and remain in rural veterinary practice are more likely to be those originating from and living in rural Alberta and/or having significant interest in and experience with rural veterinary practice and the rural lifestyle; and

WHEREAS there are not enough training spaces in Alberta veterinary medicine and animal health technology programs (including at the University of Calgary Veterinary Medicine Faculty) for Alberta students choosing a career in rural veterinary medicine; and

WHEREAS in 2020, veterinary medicine in Alberta generated 10,211 full time employees who contributed over \$206 million in federal, provincial and municipal taxes; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities have a considerable role in attracting and retaining a local and regional workforce including veterinary medical professionals;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) supports attraction and retention actions to reduce veterinary professional shortages, especially in rural Alberta; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA urge the Government of Alberta to improve veterinary education opportunities and officially support the development of new programs at the University of Calgary Veterinary Medicine Faculty (UCVM) through actions that include:

1. **Development of a rural practitioner stream;**
2. **Participation of RMA in UCVM programs of outreach to rural municipalities to encourage and support successful rural student admission to UCVM;**
3. **Development of an online veterinary support program to help support veterinarians in practice, increasing retention of veterinary professionals;**
4. **Development of a stackable clinical certificate program allowing for certification of foreign trained veterinarians and providing a structured process for career diversification and/or re-entry into the work force after career break; and**
5. **Participation of RMA in a committee pursuing recruitment of foreign veterinarians from high quality universities to help ensure "a good fit" in rural communities; and**

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA work with UCVM to expand the UCVM admissions committee and provide, on an ongoing basis, a selected number of committee members who are located in, and familiar, with rural Alberta needs; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA examine and implement best practices to conduct outreach to recruit veterinary students and retain veterinary professionals who will work and reside in rural Alberta.

Government Response

Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development

Thank you for your March 30, 2022, email regarding RMA Resolution 3-22S: Attraction and Retention of Veterinarians to Rural Veterinary Practice. The Government of Alberta recognizes the importance of the veterinary profession to the health of the province and recognizes the veterinary workforce shortage is a pressing issue. We will continue to work collaboratively with stakeholders to address it.

As you are aware, the issue of attracting and retaining veterinary professionals in rural areas, as with other health professions, is a complex and multifaceted problem with no simple solutions. University of Calgary's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (UCVM) and other schools have been extensively studying the admissions process so more graduates enter and remain in rural veterinary practice. The faculty's most recent approach, which was implemented just this past year, requires a minimum academic performance. Following that requirement, the majority of ranking is based on a comprehensive file review of the applicants. The department remains engaged through the participation of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian in the UCVM Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

With respect to the need to increase training spaces for veterinary professionals, I am pleased to say that through the Alberta at Work initiative, Budget 2022 provided \$59 million in capital investment over three years to expand UCVM infrastructure. This initiative will also enable targeted expansion in enrollment for veterinarians and veterinary technologists at the UCVM and technical colleges in Alberta. In addition, a three-year grant was provided to the UCVM in 2021 for veterinary diagnostics to support livestock producers in Alberta and enhance training opportunities for students from those submissions.

The Ministry of Labour and Immigration will also provide support to the Alberta Veterinary Medicine Association. This will include identifying potential Labour Market Partnership grant projects that support veterinary attraction and retention initiatives, promotion of occupation and opportunities, exploring international labour pools and labour mobility matters. The Ministry of Labour and Immigration will also support sector employers with the guidance and resources they need for attraction, recruitment and retention activities.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates several initiatives that support the intent of the resolution. The new admissions process is of interest, as it appears to focus on elements outside of academic achievement. RMA will monitor how this process is impacting rural veterinarian availability.

The \$59 million capital investment is welcomed by RMA, and will certainly increase the capacity of UCVM to train more veterinarians. Additionally, the work of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration to support the Alberta Veterinary Medicine Association is a positive step, and RMA will monitor how this initiative progresses.

RMA is engaged with UCVM to address the operative clauses in the resolution related to RMA working with UCVM. The goal of this partnership is to address the shortage of rural veterinarians through a collaborative

approach, and partnering formally with UCMV as appropriate. As this work is still underway, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted In Principle**.

Resolution 4-22S

Continued Support for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Alberta

Northern Sunrise County

Carried

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

WHEREAS the majority of rural municipalities support the continuation of the **Royal Canadian Mounted Police** (RCMP) as Alberta's primary municipal police service provider; and

WHEREAS Alberta had its own provincial police service in the early twentieth century; and

WHEREAS Alberta's previous provincial police service was replaced by RCMP contract policing due to economic hardships experienced in the province resulting in the provincial police service becoming unsustainable; and

WHEREAS RCMP detachments are established and well respected in communities across Alberta; and

WHEREAS municipalities should not face increased costs to support the shift to a provincial police service; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has not released a detailed funding model to account for who will be covering the costs of transitioning to an **Alberta Provincial Police Service** (APPS) or the operation of the service; and

WHEREAS support for the Alberta RCMP has held strong in ongoing surveys over the past year despite the heavy politicization on the issue; and

WHEREAS creating a provincial police service remains very low priority for Albertans, with one recent public survey reporting 70% opposition to the replacement of the RCMP and 80% satisfaction with current RCMP policing; and

WHEREAS the APPS Transition Study, developed by PricewaterhouseCoopers on behalf of the Government of Alberta, does not include statistics, surveys conducted, or any evidence of engagement with municipalities, citizens, or specific communities; and

WHEREAS the APPS Transition Study cost over two million dollars, which is ultimately paid for by the Alberta taxpayers;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta not create an Alberta Provincial Police Service.

Government Response

Justice and Solicitor General

Thank you for your correspondence regarding Alberta's review of provincial policing. Over the past few months, I have been meeting with municipal and Indigenous leaders as well as other stakeholders to discuss the prospect of transitioning to an Alberta provincial police. At this time, I am writing to provide greater clarity on a number of issues.

First of all, let me state unequivocally that this review is in no way a reflection of the men and women who serve in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Albertans are justifiably proud and grateful for the RCMP and their proud history of serving our province.

Alberta's existing contract for providing province-wide policing lies with the federal government not with the RCMP. This is an important distinction, as our concerns are with the federal contract, which, over the years, has prevented successive governments from significantly improving policing at a local level. These concerns include:

- Limited civilian oversight and governance structure. Since the RCMP is governed by federal legislation, regulations, and policy, Alberta can only go so far to improve governance in Alberta without the federal government's willingness to listen and act accordingly.
- Recruitment and detachment staffing remains a problem for Alberta, especially in rural areas. Decisions about recruiting, staffing, and transfers are all done at a national level. Alberta's needs take a back seat, when weighed against the needs of other provinces.
- Training is done out-of-province and is not Alberta-focused. Alberta is different from other parts of Canada, and the training our provincial police officers receive should reflect this difference.
- The federal government uses a national forensic laboratory system. This system prioritizes processing only the most serious criminal forensic evidence and rarely processes evidence for offences like property crime. Alberta needs its own forensic laboratory system so all forensic evidence is processed.
- The federal government unilaterally signed a multi-year collective agreement that resulted in dramatic increases to costs for municipalities. While Alberta's government supports efforts to compensate RCMP officers fairly, the provincial government and municipalities who contract with the RCMP were not allowed to participate at the negotiating table. Alberta needs a model that puts Albertans in control of critical decisions about policing in the province.

Additionally, it is well known that the federal government is reconsidering its commitment to contract policing in the future. In 2021, the Canadian Parliament released a report which found that the RCMP's contract policing role makes it difficult for the RCMP to focus on front-line community policing while at the same time providing national police services. The federal government has also pointed out the escalating cost of RCMP contract policing, and the Prime Minister's recent mandate letter to the minister responsible for the RCMP includes direction to conduct an assessment of RCMP contract policing in consultation with provinces, territories, municipalities, and Indigenous communities. Please see the following link for more information on the federal government's view: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnl/trnsprnc/brfngintrls/trnstn-bndis/2019120/013/index-en.aspx>.

That is why there has been a national conversation taking place about the future of contract policing. The provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan have all announced plans to examine provincial policing models. In the spring of this year, a British Columbia (BC) committee of politicians from all parties, unanimously recommended that BC replace the RCMP with a new provincial police service. At the municipal level, Surrey BC is in the process of transitioning from the RCMP to their own municipal police and several municipalities in the Maritimes are also considering a change.

Our government believes that a provincial police, no longer fettered by bureaucratic management in Ottawa, could be more responsive to Albertans. Alberta Justice and Solicitor General contracted with PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Canada to develop the Alberta Provincial Police Transition Study. The provincial policing model presented in this report addresses the long-standing challenges associated with contract policing and provides Alberta with options that would:

- Increase the number of front-line police officers and civilian specialists serving our communities and enhance detachment staffing levels;
- Incorporate dedicated mental health nurses and social workers into the police service to divert individuals, who are experiencing mental illness and addiction issues, away from the justice system;

- Rebalance provincial police officer deployment towards rural communities and reduce the number of provincial police officers deployed in headquarters or administrative roles. An Alberta provincial police would provide a new 'minimum viable' detachment size of ten police officers. This would increase overall staffing levels by sixty-five per cent in forty-two detachments located in smaller rural communities.
- Reduce transfers of officers in and out of communities, and increase police knowledge of local public safety issues;
- Reduce federal/provincial jurisdictional barriers that limit the integration of police services across Alberta;
- Utilize existing provincial government resources to make the provincial police more cost-effective;
- Maintain and support our independent municipal police services by exploring new opportunities to work together to keep Albertans safe; and
- Support the critical work undertaken by First Nations police services and continue to lobby the federal government to expand these services to other First Nations who desire their own policing services.

It is clear that Albertans greatly value the work of front-line RCMP members and civilian employees and the role that they have in Alberta's communities. Should Alberta decide to adopt a provincial policing model, Alberta's government would welcome as many RCMP members and civilian staff to transfer into a provincial police as is practicable. We would ensure that RCMP members who choose to transfer to an Alberta provincial police would not face negative financial consequences from their desire to continue serving Albertans. This means that we would actively lobby the federal government to support RCMP pay, benefits, and pension portability between the RCMP and any potential Alberta provincial police.

The ultimate goal, however, of a potential provincial police is to improve service levels and address crime. In this regard, the exploration of a potential Alberta provincial police would align with work already undertaken by this government to strengthen Alberta's justice system. The Government of Alberta has:

- Invested up to \$20 million over four years to expand drug treatment courts. Drug treatment courts aim to reduce the number of crimes motivated by drug addiction;
- Invested \$207 million over five years for a new Red Deer Justice Centre, with thirteen other court facilities across Alberta having been upgraded over the last few years;
- Hired 50 new Crown prosecutors and additional support staff to ensure excellence in prosecutions;
- Created the Rural Alberta Provincial Integrated Defence (RAPID) Response to allow provincial peace officers to respond to a wider range of calls;
- Allocated additional funding to the Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams (ALERT) to combat organized crime, illegal guns, and gangs;
- Committed to expand Indigenous policing by funding 15 new police officers for the Blood Tribe, Tsuut'ina Nation, and Lakeshore Regional police services;
- Committed to provide a new Community Policing Grant to assist Indigenous and municipal communities in preparing a business case for their own stand-alone police service or a regional equivalent;
- Committed to upholding firearms policies and governance measures that protect Albertans, and deter illegal gun crime rather than persecuting law-abiding citizens; and
- Created an Alberta Parole Board to make parole decisions and effectively address repeat offenders and parolees responsible for crime in rural areas of our province.

Recently, Justice and Solicitor General completed an extensive engagement period from November 2021 to April 2022 to provide stakeholders with information on the concepts presented in PWC's Alberta Provincial Police Transition Study, as well as to gather feedback on these ideas. As part of this engagement process, department

staff conducted more than 60 in-person and virtual engagement sessions with participants invited from the 317 municipalities policed by the RCMP in Alberta, as well as First Nations, Metis communities, and public safety stakeholders. Information gathered during this process will be used to refine PwC's work as well as inform decisions regarding the next steps.

However, I recognize that rural municipalities may wish to have additional discussions and as I spoke of at the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) spring conference, I welcome opportunities to meeting with rural municipalities to discuss the ongoing Alberta provincial police transition study. If the RMA's executive or members would like to schedule a meeting on this topic, please contact my office at ministrvofjustice@gov.ab.ca or 780-427-2339.

No decisions have been made on whether Alberta will transition to an Alberta provincial police, and Alberta's government is continuing to listen to a wide variety of viewpoints on this topic. Thank you again, for taking the time to write. Perspectives such as yours are an important way for the provincial government to understand how we can ensure that all Albertans feel safe, secure, and protected in their communities, no matter where they live.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response highlights recent funding and staffing increases to address issues related to crime. Additionally, the response provides rationale as to why the Government of Alberta is considering an Alberta Provincial Police Service (APPS). While the response indicates no decisions have yet been made, the Government of Alberta is not stepping back from the APPS proposal. In the past year multiple initiatives have been undertaken by the Government of Alberta to support the creation of an APPS. This includes engaging with municipalities, creating a website to share positional information with the public, and hosting webinars designed to promote an APPS. Additionally, RMA has been invited to participate in a working group to explore the future of policing in Alberta. Based on the continued efforts of the Government of Alberta to create an APPS, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to oppose the creation of an APPS. For more information on RMA's position related to the APPS, visit the RMA provincial police hub.

Resolution 6-22S

Responsiveness of Service Delivery by Quasi-independent Agencies in Alberta

MD of Willow Creek

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Executive Council**

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has established a number of arms-length quasi-independent agencies, including Alberta Health Services, the Alberta Utilities Commission and the Natural Resources Conservation Board; and

WHEREAS the administration and regulation of core public services pertaining to health, utilities and the environment has resulted in a framework of unelected officials with little accountability to the public making decisions which impact the lives, property and environment of Albertans; and

WHEREAS the lack of accountability and responsiveness by Alberta Health Services to repeated and widespread concerns regarding the efficient and effective delivery of emergency medical services have resulted in service delays creating serious public safety concerns; and

WHEREAS the lack of accountability and responsiveness by the Natural Resource Conservation Board to municipal concerns regarding the approval of confined feeding operations prior to Water Act approvals being issued by Alberta Environment and Parks is a failure of fundamental planning practice; and

WHEREAS the lack of accountability and responsiveness by the Alberta Utilities Commission to the community planning and environmental sustainability concerns repeatedly expressed by municipalities and citizens pertaining to the approval of large renewable energy projects on prime agricultural land does not align with good planning practice; and

WHEREAS the implementation of arms-length quasi-independent agencies to administer critical public services, regulations and policy is becoming increasingly common; and

WHEREAS these types of agencies do not provide the level of public accountability for their decisions that is required of public bodies;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta review the continued use of unelected, quasi-independent agencies for the administration and delivery of essential public services, with the results of the review published for public examination.

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 **Incomplete Information**. RMA will update the status when a response is received.

Resolution 7-22S

Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) Report Funding

County of Grand Prairie

Carried

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

WHEREAS the membership of the Rural Municipal Alberta requested that the province review the funding models for regional air ambulance through Resolution 14-19F: Provincial Funding for Regional Air Ambulance; and

WHEREAS the June 2021 **Helicopter Emergency Medical Services** (HEMS) report by Alberta Health identifies HEMS as an integral part of emergency medical services at a critical care level; and

WHEREAS locally and regionally operated air ambulance service complements ground ambulance, and is provided to central and northwestern Alberta by **Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society** (STARS) at a critical care level; to northeastern Alberta by the **Helicopter Emergency Response Organization** (HERO) at an advanced life support level from Fort McMurray; and to southeastern Alberta by the **Helicopter Air Lift Operation** (HALO) at an advanced life support or basic life support level from Medicine Hat; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta provides limited funding through Alberta Health Services to support locally or regionally operated air ambulance services, with any additional required support coming from municipalities and private and corporate donations; and

WHEREAS many municipalities contribute a significant amount of funding to support locally and regionally operated air ambulance services under the current funding model, despite the fact that emergency medical services are a provincial responsibility; and

WHEREAS HEMS providers have demonstrated a proven ability to raise funds to help support operations; and

WHEREAS more stable and sustainable funding of HEMS will support quality assurance and ongoing improvement, ensuring HEMS remains viable, safe and effective in alignment with a coherent provincial strategy for air and ground ambulance;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services to proceed with the development and implementation of necessary policy and standard changes towards further critical care integration across the EMS system, including consistently funding a minimum of 50 per cent of an air ambulance provider's operating costs, as recommended in the Helicopter Emergency Medical Services report.

Government Response

Alberta Health Services

On March 25, 2022, the Government of Alberta announced new funding to support the operations of STARS, as well as new funding for HERO and HALO on March 31, 2022. The announced funding is targeted to be 50% of the cost of operating helicopter air ambulance based for the services these agencies currently provide. The funding will follow along with the introduction of 5-year agreements that will be established between AHS and the providers.

AHS is currently working with STARS, HERO, and HALO individually to ensure funds are available during contract discussions.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The funding commitment for HALO and HERO from the Government of Alberta is welcome news and meets the intent of the resolution. RMA will continue to monitor the progress of the five-year agreements.

At this time, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 8-22S

Reversing Changes to Aerodrome Standards Implemented by Transport Canada

MD of Smoky River

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Transport Canada**

WHEREAS aerodromes are non-certified facilities that provide essential transportation services such as emergency services, medical services, and wildfire suppression; and

WHEREAS section 803.02 of the Canadian Aviation Regulations provides the development and publication of instrument procedure requirements for aerodromes in Canada; and

WHEREAS Transport Canada's TP312 5th Edition Aerodrome Standards introduced changes relating to the physical characteristics for aerodromes; and

WHEREAS the AC 301-001 Advisory Circular changed the Instrument Approach Procedures ("IAP") requirements for aerodromes; and

WHEREAS the AC 803-007 Advisory Circular changed the Aerodrome Operator Attestation requirements; and

WHEREAS the changes for aerodromes will increase the approach and departure minimum weather requirements for runways; and

WHEREAS the requirements will reduce accessibility for aircraft, including air ambulances, to approach and depart aerodromes;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta requests that the Government of Canada either reverse the newly amended Instrument Approach Procedures to maintain aircraft accessibility to community aerodromes in Alberta, or suspend the new requirements to carry out the necessary studies such as a risk assessment or impact assessment associated with the new standards.

Government Response

Transport Canada

Thank you for your letter of March 30, 2022, in which you informed me of a resolution adopted by the Rural Municipalities of Alberta pertaining to aerodrome standards. I apologize for my delay in replying.

The change to the specifications in Advisory Circular 301-001 was needed to standardize the level of safety with that of runways supporting instrument approach procedures (IAPs) at Canadian airports. This will provide a consistent and recognized level of safety for all instrument approaches in Canada during the transition from the instrument approach procedure throughout the visual manoeuvre and landing.

As part of the publication of AC 301-001 Issue 05 Procedure to be followed in order to support Instrument Approach Procedures at a non-certified aerodrome, a one-hour web-based information session was conducted with industry stakeholders on March 17, 2022, to review the changes to the attestation specifications.

With reference to the Aircraft Group Number (AGN) methodology in AC 301-001 Issue 05, it will be up to an aerodrome operator, in consideration of the needs of the community, to formally attest as to what category of aircraft their runway obstacle-free environment is suitable for supporting IAPs. Due to the structure of the technical specifications, the AGN methodology allows the use of smaller protected airspace for some

aerodromes and will therefore allow access to most aerodromes for the common medevac airplane types, such as the Beech King Air class, operating at these locations.

With the subsequent publication of the attested AGN in the Canada Flight Supplement, air operators and air crews will have access to supplemental information to assess if an aerodrome is suitable for their operation and aircraft. I would note that the publication of a particular AGN for a runway does not in itself impose any additional regulatory restriction to the runway's use at the aerodrome. The air crew's assessment of the suitability of the aerodrome is a current Canadian Aviation Regulations requirement that is always applicable to all aircraft operations. It is the aerodrome operator's decision to decide to attest or not based on the needs of the community.

Transport Canada's first and foremost objective remains safety, and it is our intent to continue to uphold a high level of safety at Canada's aerodromes supporting instrument approach procedures. Using the same set of specifications with regards to obstacle separation for all runways in Canada achieves this level of safety.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

Transport Canada's response indicates that the changes made to aerodrome standards are intended to enhance safety measures at Canadian airports that support instrument approach procedures (IAPs). The changes are also required in order to establish a standard and recognized level of safety for all instrument approaches across Canada.

RMA appreciates Transport Canada's response. However, the resolution specifically calls for reversing the amendment to the instrument approach procedures or postponing the implementation until an impact assessment can be conducted. Transport Canada's response indicates no intention to reverse the implemented amendment. Therefore, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

To better understand this issue and its impacts on rural airports, RMA has engaged with the Alberta Aviation Council (AAC) and the Canadian Operators and Pilots Association (COPA). These associations are aware of the impacts that these changes will have on local airports, however they are focused on mitigation of the impacts. The AAC and COPA expressed that since the changes fall within international standards, they are unlikely to be reversed or modified and that efforts will be best utilized advocating for mitigation strategies. Specifically, through use of collaboration agreements between airports and providing training and resources to airports. Although mitigation is not the intent of the resolution, RMA plans to support mitigation efforts while continuing to advocate for impact assessments.

Resolution ER1-22S

Alberta Energy Regulator Action to Require Oil and Gas Companies to Pay Municipal Property Taxes

RMA

Carried

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

WHEREAS Alberta's rural municipalities rely on property tax revenue to support the construction and maintenance of infrastructure and provision of municipal services; and

WHEREAS Alberta's rural municipalities host most of the province's oil and gas exploration activity; and

WHEREAS oil and gas companies utilize rural municipal infrastructure (particularly roads and bridges) to access well sites, pipelines, and other privately owned infrastructure; and

WHEREAS the Municipal Government Act empowers municipalities to apply property taxes to oil and gas assets located within their municipal boundaries; and

WHEREAS the Municipal Government Act provides municipalities with tools and powers to recover lost revenue from non-payment of property taxes, including the seizure and sale of property; and

WHEREAS due to gaps in provincial legislation and regulations, municipalities have been unable to apply many of these powers to recover unpaid taxes on oil and gas properties in recent years; and

WHEREAS this lack of enforcement mechanisms has resulted in some oil and gas companies ignoring their legal obligations to pay property taxes; and

WHEREAS unpaid property taxes have serious impacts in rural municipalities, including reduced service levels, increased tax rates on other property types, and reductions in regional collaboration; and

WHEREAS the total amount of unpaid taxes owed to rural municipalities has increased by 213% from the 2018 tax year (\$81 million) to the 2021 tax year (\$253 million); and

WHEREAS in the 2021 tax year, the average rural municipality faced an unpaid tax burden of \$3.7 million dollars from oil and gas operations; and

WHEREAS some oil and gas companies are also ignoring their obligations to honour surface rights agreements, resulting in many rural property owners being directly impacted in the form of a lack of compensation to offset the loss of use of a portion of their property; and

WHEREAS in recent years, the oil and gas industry has focused on fulfilling an environmental, social, and governance (ESG) mandate in which companies strive to operate as accountable corporate citizens; and

WHEREAS non-payment of property taxes undermines the "social" pillar of the industry's ESG focus, harming the industry's reputation locally, across Alberta, and internationally; and

WHEREAS in 2021, the Government of Alberta amended the Municipal Government Act to clarify the ability of municipalities to apply special liens to oil and gas property to recover unpaid taxes; and

WHEREAS in 2021, the **Alberta Energy Regulator** (AER) amended Directive 067 to clarify that the AER may consider payment of property taxes when reviewing applications for oil and gas licenses; and

WHEREAS neither change has resulted in a solution to unpaid taxes by the oil and gas industry, as the amount of unpaid taxes continues to grow, despite significant increases in the price of oil and gas and the drilling of new oil and gas wells in 2021 compared to previous years; and

WHEREAS the AER has previously stated that enforcing the oil and gas industry's payment of municipal property taxes is beyond their scope and mandate; and

WHEREAS the AER's mandate is, in part, to ensure "the safe, efficient, orderly, and environmentally responsible development of oil, oil sands, natural gas, and coal resources over their entire life cycle...while providing economic benefits for all Albertans"; and

WHEREAS non-payment of property taxes negatively impacts all other property taxpayers in the form of either increased tax rates or reduced service levels to off-set uncollected property tax revenue; and

WHEREAS non-payment of property taxes is an indication that an oil and gas company may be unable or unwilling to meet other environmental or regulatory responsibilities;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) urge the Government of Alberta to direct the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) to amend the directives, policies and other processes (including directives 067 and 088) necessary to require any company regulated by the AER to pay all current and historical municipal property taxes in full as a condition of operating in Alberta; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the AER replace its current practice of relying on industry self-reporting of property tax payments by collaborating with the RMA and rural municipalities to develop a system by which rural municipalities can easily share unpaid property tax information with the AER.

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 **Incomplete Information**. RMA will update the status when a response is received.

Section 2: Advocacy Report Card

The following table is a summary of RMA's current resolutions excluding the resolutions adopted in spring 2022, which are detailed in Section 1. Recent developments on the resolutions are detailed below in the corresponding categories, and readers are reminded that although resolution statuses may remain unchanged, work on each resolution is ongoing. Each resolution has a three-year lifespan to reflect the nature of shifting government policy development and timelines associated with legislative changes and implementation.

Resolutions at a Glance

| # | RESOLUTION TITLE | STATUS |
|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| AGRICULTURE | | |
| 4-21S | Agriculture Service Board Provincial Committee Funding | Accepted |
| 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 |
| BROADBAND AND CONNECTIVITY | | |
| 9-20F | CRTC Aggregate Wholesale Pricing to Mandate Rural Investment | Accepted in Part |
| COMMUNITY SERVICES | | |
| 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 |
| EMERGENCY SERVICES | | |
| 1-21F | Emergency Medical Services Capacity and Service Delivery in Rural Alberta | Accepted in Principle |
| 14-19F | Provincial Funding for Regional Air Ambulance | Accepted |
| 21-19F | Cellular 911 Call Answer Fees Increase | Accepted |

| # | RESOLUTION TITLE | STATUS |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------|
| ENERGY | | |
| 7-21F | Awareness Campaign for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) | Intent Not Met |
| 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 |
| ENVIRONMENT | | |
| 10-21F | Site C Dam – BC Hydro | Intent Not Met |
| 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 |
| HEALTH AND SENIORS | | |
| 5-21F | Seniors’ Foundation Requisitions | Accepted in Part |
| ER2-20S | New Physician Funding Framework | Accepted |
| ER3-20S | Housing Management Body Compliance Requirements During Pandemic Response | Accepted in Part |

| # | RESOLUTION TITLE | STATUS |
|---|---|------------------------|
| 20-19F | Policies for Supporting Community Hospice Associations | Accepted in Principle |
| MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE | | |
| 2-21F | Disaster Recovery Program Cost Allocations | Incomplete Information |
| 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 |
| PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT | | |
| 6-21F | Historical Resources Impact Assessments | Intent Not Met |
| 3-21S | Personal Cannabis Production for Medical Use | Intent Not Met |
| 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 |
| POLICING AND RURAL CRIME | | |
| 2-21S | <i>Police Act</i> Review | Accepted |
| 1-20F | Police Funding Model Freeze | Intent Not Met |

| # | RESOLUTION TITLE | STATUS |
|--|--|------------------------|
| 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 |
| RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT | | |
| 5-20S | Regional Economic Development Alliances Continued Provincial Funding | Intent Not Met |
| 6-20S | Economic State of Crisis | Intent Not Met |
| TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | | |
| 3-21F | Vegetation Management on Alberta Provincial Highways | Intent Not Met |
| 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 |
| OTHER | | |
| 9-21F | Increasing Knowledge-Sharing Among Regulators of Cannabis Production Facilities | Intent Not Met |
| ER1-21F | RMA Refusal to Engage in Merger Discussions with Alberta Municipalities (formerly known as AUMA) | Accepted |
| 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 |

AGRICULTURE

Resolution 4-21S

Agriculture Service Board Provincial Committee Funding

Status: Accepted

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 Agricultural Service Board Provincial Committee (ASBPC) has informed RMA that the Government of Alberta has offered a five-year grant to cover administrative support for the ASBPC. As this funding is in line with the request made by the ASBPC, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 3-20F

Support for Alberta Farmland Trust

Status: Accepted in Principle

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 has completed a jurisdictional scan and found that like Alberta, municipal agricultural declarations do not trigger automatic funding or support in other provinces. 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

Status: Intent Not Met

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**.

BROADBAND AND CONNECTIVITY

Resolution 9-20F

CRTC Aggregate Wholesale Pricing to Mandate Rural Investment

Status: Accepted In Part

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

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 1-21F

Emergency Medical Services Capacity and Service Delivery in Rural Alberta

Status: Accepted in Principle

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 pilots include the Red Deer Inter-Facility Transfer, which focuses on managing low-acuity patient transfers between facilities with dedicated transfer units, freeing up ambulances to handle emergency calls. This pilot is slated to take place over a minimum of two years due to capital costs and staffing requirements. Another pilot project in Spruce Grove and designed to allow Medical First Responders (MFR) to undertake critical patient transport when appropriate, and to permit Spruce Grove's regulated and cross trained MFR members to cancel an incoming ambulance when, after assessment, it is determined that the patient does not require a higher level of care or transport to a hospital. This pilot project began in September 2022 and will end in March 2023.

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. The committee has recently submitted their report and it is under review by the Minister of Health. 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 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 7-21F

Awareness Campaign for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 1-21S

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

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

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

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.

ENVIRONMENT

Resolution 10-21F

Site C Dam – BC Hydro

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 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 provides 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. The WRP is designed 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 participated 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 taskforce developed a report promoting innovative technologies to address these concerns that was shared with Alberta Environment and Parks and Alberta Transportation. RMA will update members on the response to the taskforce's white paper from the Government of Alberta.

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

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 early October 2022 an Order in Council published EPR regulations, which will come into effect November 30, 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

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**.

HEALTH AND SENIORS

Resolution 5-21F

Seniors' Foundation Requisitions

Status: Accepted in Part

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request the Government of Alberta to engage municipalities, and membership associations such as 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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 (which is now complete and has resulted in the publication of a 10-year affordable housing strategy). 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. As part of the 10-year affordable housing strategy there is a shift towards developing "competency based boards" for HMBs. Competency based boards would see a matrix used to ensure certain skills are present on a board, such as legal, governance, and finance skills. While there is concern about how this may impact participation in HMBs, RMA has learned the intent of this move is to ensure certain skills are available to an HMB, rather than ensuring that each HMB specifically has a lawyer or accountant. RMA will continue to monitor for training programs available to board members to help them gain these skills. If properly implemented, this approach may help address the intent of the third operative clause related to ensuring HMBs are aware of their powers and responsibilities.

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 ER2-20S

New Physician Funding Framework

Status: Accepted

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: The Government of Alberta and the Alberta Medical Association have reached an agreement which supports the shared priorities of both groups. The agreement includes significant investment into recruitment and retention of physicians in underserved and underserved communities and a one-time \$2 million increase of funding for the RESIDE program, which provides incentives for family physicians to practice in rural Alberta. As a result of renewed agreement, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution ER3-20S

Housing Management Body Compliance Requirements During Pandemic Response

Status: Accepted in Part

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

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. Between 2020 and 2021, a total of \$8.7M was allocated to five projects and one pharmacy initiative that will enhance public awareness, community palliative care supports and caregiver supports as well as an increased uptake of advance care planning and develop competency-based education for health care providers. In 2020 and 2021, key stakeholders were engaged to determine how the remaining funding should be spent. The engagement report determined four recommendations including earlier access to palliative care, education and training, community supports and services and continue research and innovation. The Government of Alberta has recognized the need to assess existing hospice funding models and to expand community-based palliative and end of life care services to address the increased demand in hospice capacity, and continue to work with AHS and community partners to do so. 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**.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

Resolution 2-21F

Disaster Recovery Program Cost Allocations

Status: Incomplete Information

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: As RMA has not yet received a response, this resolution is assigned a status of **Incomplete information**. RMA will update the status when a response is received.

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.

The Government of Alberta conducted a review of the finance sections of the MGA in late 2021 and did not include the change requested in the resolution within the amendments made to the Act as a result of the review.

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

Resolution 17-20F

Rural Small Business Properties Assessment Sub-Classes Amendment

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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 then appealed the decision to the Court of King's Bench, but ultimately chose to withdraw the appeal. Although the attempt by CNRL to use schedule D to address broad economic conditions was not successful, it reflects the risks that the broad wording poses for municipalities and other taxpayers.

The Government of Alberta convened a second assessment model review process in spring 2022. The process is expected span multiple years and address all types of regulated property. RMA will continue to use the direction provided in this resolution to support their positioning related to M&E property. 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

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 related to the submission.

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 of 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.

In spring 2022, the Government of Alberta provided RMA with a grant to develop a guide to support members in effectively utilizing the powers in Bill 77. RMA is currently working with Brownlee LLP to develop the guide and expects it to be complete by early 2023.

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

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 Licenses 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 license applicant. Under Directive 067, the AER could deny a company’s application to be eligible to hold energy licenses due to unpaid taxes, which was not previously the case.

While the changes to Directive 067 have the potential to represent a crucial step forward in how oil and gas companies may be held accountable for non-payment of property taxes, the AER has not shared any details on how the changes will be implemented, or if and to what extent the powers have been used. The AER has also chosen to rely on industry self-reporting of tax payment performance rather than collaborating with RMA and/or rural municipalities to develop an ongoing information-sharing network.

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

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. In response to this decision, the CRA has drafted a new memorandum, titled *Determining Whether a Transfer Payment is Consideration for a Supply*, which replaces two previous memorandums and is intended to explain how and when the GST/HST provisions of the *Excise Tax Act* apply to transfer payments. While this memorandum reflects an effort on the part of the CRA to better address this issue, RMA has not yet had an opportunity to analyze the memorandum.

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**.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Resolution 6-21F

Historical Resources Impact Assessments

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that there are no plans to consider changes or revisions to the current assessment process under the Historical Resources Act which requires developers to conduct historical resource assessments in areas deemed as likely to contain such resources. The response also indicates no intention to develop a compensation mechanism for landowners in cases where property becomes undevelopable due to the discovery of historical resources.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of Intent Not Met and will continue to advocate for a mechanism to reduce the impacts of the historical resources assessment process on both landowners and developers.

Resolution 3-21S

Personal Cannabis Production for Medical Use

Status: Intent Not Met

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: Although RMA has not received a formal response to this resolution from the federal Minister of Health, RMA has discussed this issue with Health Canada staff. Based on these conversations, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Health Canada has informed the RMA that there are significant privacy issues surrounding personal cannabis production for medical use which prevents Health Canada from sharing licensee information with municipalities. Health Canada has a registration process for those who are wanting to produce medical cannabis and adherence to the registration regulations is enforced by the RCMP or local law enforcement. The registration process does not require individuals to make municipalities aware of the production and production limits as assigned by a medical professional. RMA will continue to work with Health Canada to better balance confidentiality and information sharing with municipalities.

Resolution 6-21S

National Flood Insurance Strategy and Community Resiliency Advocacy

Status: Accepted in Part

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.

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.

The Task Force [released their final report](#) in August 2022. The report, titled *Adapting to Rising Flood Risk: An Analysis of Insurance Solutions for Canada*, included the following key findings:

- Total residential flood risk in Canada is estimated at \$9.2 billion per year, significantly higher than previous estimates.
- The vast majority of risk is concentrated in a small number of the highest risk homes.
- Improvements in flood insurance design and availability are needed to better protect Canadians and reduce the pressure on government to provide financial assistance to those uninsured.
- Relocation can be a powerful tool to reduce risk but must be informed at the local level.
- The design and pricing of flood insurance products must proceed through an equity lens, and consider affordability, as well as improved understanding among individuals and community organizations.
- Within the context of flood risk management, the cultural connections of Indigenous peoples to water and land must be respected.

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 contributing to the implementation of the task force's recommendations.

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. More recently, RMA members have recently raised concerns with the impacts of section 619 on the ability of municipal land use plans to guide the planning and approval of renewable energy projects, further increasing the importance of this issue.

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.

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

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 membership. 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: *Accepted*

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: The Government of Alberta (GOA) response highlights *Police Act* engagement sessions that occurred with municipalities throughout 2021. While these sessions did provide opportunities for engagement, the GOA continues to explore changes to the *Police Act* that are contrary to RMA's position such as replacing local police committees with regional governance bodies. Such an approach would limit local input on policing priorities. However, as engagement has continued, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted** and will continue to advocate based on the principle of local input.

Resolution 1-20F

Police Funding Model Freeze

Status: *Intent Not Met*

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.

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.

The Government of Canada has reached an agreement with the National Police Federation (NPF), which represents 19,000 RCMP officers below the rank of “Inspector”. This agreement will see NPF member receive significant retroactive pay of over 20%. 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 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

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 ABmunis) 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

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.

As the current three-year funding arrangement are currently concluding and Alberta is in a much stronger fiscal position than at the time this resolution was endorsed, RMA is in the process of following up with Alberta Jobs, Economy and Innovation to clarify plans for REDA funding moving forward.

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 3-21F

Vegetation Management on Alberta Provincial Highways

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: Alberta Transportation originally 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, and during a spring 2022 meeting with RMA, the Minister of Transportation confirmed that the review would take place and that it may include a greater focus on controlling legislated weeds. 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.

RMA followed up with Alberta Transportation in October 2022 on the review status. Alberta Transportation staff indicated that the review had been delayed but would begin in late 2022 with the goal of implementing any changes prior to the 2023 weed season. RMA assigns this resolution a status of Intent Not Met and will continue to engage with Alberta Transportation on this issue and review the new plan once released.

Resolution 15-19F

Provincial Highway Access and Setback Authority

Status: Accepted in Principle

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.

Currently, the pilot project has 19 volunteer municipalities participating. As of October 2022, only the City of Camrose has finalized a level 2 HVMA. The pilot project will be closing shortly and the HVMA program will be opened provincially at the end of the year. Level 1 HVMAs will be made available on a gradual basis by Alberta Transportation region. According to Alberta Transportation, when level 1 HVMA abilities become available in a region, impacted municipalities will not have to request a level 1 HVMA, but will be enabled to implement one. Alberta Transportation has invited RMA to a meeting in late November to discuss the HVMA pilots and next steps related to enabling municipalities to utilize HVMAs on a provincewide basis.

As a result, this resolution is assigned the status of **Accepted in Principle**, and will be revisited based on progress made in making HVMAs available province-wide.

Resolution 17-19F

Airports Capital Assistance Program Funding for Regional Airports in Canada

Status: Incomplete Information

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**.

OTHER

Resolution 9-21F

Increasing Knowledge-Sharing Among Regulators of Cannabis Production Facilities

Status: Intent Not Met

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*.

DEVELOPMENTS: Although RMA has not received an official response to this resolution from the federal Minister of Health, RMA staff have engaged Health Canada staff in discussions.

Based on conversations with Health Canada, RMA has clarified that there are requirements for licensees to notify municipalities when a license is obtained, however there is no mandate enforcing this requirement. RMA remains unsure on how Health Canada ensures requirements are met, however the RMA will continue to advocate to ensure municipalities are informed on the licenses approved in their area. RMA has informed Health Canada that some mechanism or framework needs to be established to communicate directly with municipalities, as they are directly impacted by operations. Further, RMA was made aware that inspector reports are available on the Health Canada website, however there is significant delay between the time of the investigation and the release of the report. RMA is advocating for an interim report to be sent directly to affected municipalities to ensure public safety, should these gaps not be resolved. Although these clarifications do not meet the intent of the resolution, Health Canada has acknowledged the challenges municipalities are experiencing and RMA will continue to advocate to have them properly addressed.

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

Resolution ER1-21F

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

Status: Accepted

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

DEVELOPMENTS: 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**.

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

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.

In June 2022, the Government of Alberta's Select Special Committee on Real Property Rights released their final report. The report does not recommend developing a separate definition for "landowners' rights," although it does make several recommendations related to strengthening the existing rights of real property owners, including providing increased compensation in cases when land is expropriated or government policy decisions impact use of the land, and providing real property owners with a stronger voice related to compensation disputes under the *Surface Rights Act*.

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

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, held in Regina, did not appear to have significant rural- or Western Canada-specific programming.

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

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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