

December 9, 2022

RMA Heads to Ottawa to Talk Rural Municipal Issues

In recent years, the RMA has increased its focus on advocating on federal issues. This has included monitoring federal issue development for impacts on RMA members, building relationships with federal decision-makers, and participating in engagements and making submissions on federal policy and program development issues.

Recently, the RMA undertook an advocacy trip to Ottawa to strengthen federal connections and share the rural municipal perspective on key issues with federal decision-makers. The RMA worked with a federally-focused consultant to organize meetings in Ottawa. The RMA's federal advocacy committee, along with staff, travelled to Ottawa in November and had several meetings to discuss the RMA's federal priority issues. RMA delegates were in Ottawa for two days and met with 14 departments and senators.

Federal Priority Issues

The RMA's advocacy efforts during the advocacy trip were based on a combination of member resolutions, board direction, emerging federal issues, and discussions with FCM. Many of the priorities also align with those identified in the [RMA's 2023 federal pre-budget submission](#):

Rural connectivity

- ◆ More efficient and targeted Universal Broadband Fund distribution.
- ◆ Changes to spectrum policy related to set asides and "use it or lose it."

Disaster recovery and mitigation

- ◆ Targeted support for rural communities.
- ◆ Infrastructure and asset management funding to plan for disasters.
- ◆ Federal and provincial climate change-related funding should support municipalities to plan and upgrade infrastructure for climate resiliency.

Rural infrastructure support

- ◆ Standalone federal funding programs specifically for rural infrastructure.
- ◆ Recognition that rural infrastructure has national economic development impacts.
- ◆ Eligibility criteria for federal infrastructure funding programs that ensures funding intended for rural communities actually flows to those that need it most.

RCMP retroactive pay

- ◆ Concerns with municipalities being responsible for taking on costs associated with retroactive pay when having no say in bargaining,
- ◆ Impacts on municipalities under PPSA who are not directly impacted.

Just transition process

- ◆ Consider the impacts on municipalities.

- ◆ Ensuring the right voices are guiding the just transition process.

Stakeholders

RMA's delegates in Ottawa attended 14 meetings in two days. The team met with the following departments and senators:

- ◆ The Alberta Conservative Caucus
- ◆ Infrastructure Canada
- ◆ Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Parliamentary Affairs
- ◆ Office of the Minister of Natural Resources
- ◆ Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance
- ◆ Office of Intergovernmental Affairs
- ◆ Office of the Prime Minister
- ◆ Office of the Minister of Infrastructure and Intergovernmental Affairs
- ◆ Office of the Leader of the Official Opposition
- ◆ Office of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change
- ◆ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
- ◆ Office of the Minister of Public Safety
- ◆ Senator Scott Tannas
- ◆ Senator Karen Sorenson
- ◆ Senator Paula Simons
- ◆ Senator Patti LaBoucane-Benson

Staff has followed up with stakeholders and will continue to foster the relationships developed in Ottawa. Further, the RMA will be able to leverage these relationships as we continue to advocate on several issues which are currently being debated in the house of Commons.

Outcomes

The RMA's delegates were well-received by federal decision-makers. Regional advisors spoke to the "Ottawa bubble" and their desire to hear from provincially or regionally-focused organizations such as the RMA on issues which concern rural Albertans. The RMA will maintain regular contact with these groups to ensure the RMA's voice is heard through regular touchpoints and updates on priority issues.

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