



RMA
RURAL MUNICIPALITIES
of ALBERTA

2022 Fall Convention

HIGHLIGHTS







TRADESHOW

The RMA / Canoe Tradeshow is an opportunity for members to learn about great products and services available to municipalities. It is also a chance to build relationships with vendors from here in Alberta and across the country (not to mention get some great free swag!). In addition to the snacks, drinks, and meals, this year's tradeshow featured 153 vendors. Tires for municipal vehicles, environmental management services, and municipal legal support were just some of the offerings showcased at this year's event.

A highlight of the tradeshow was the awesome door prizes offered by many vendors and the great relationships that were made. For the RMA and the Canoe Procurement Group of Canada, the tradeshow provided a great opportunity to get to know key vendors and communicate with members about their purchasing priorities.



OPENING CEREMONIES

The RMA 2022 Fall Convention kicked off with the introduction of the RMA's Board of Directors as their superhero personas! From Super Mom to Analogy Man, President McLauchlin's introduction of his board colleagues was a great way for members to get to know their RMA leadership.

Following that memorable introduction, a moment of silence was held for rural municipal leaders who passed away in the past year. The RMA also distributed long service awards to rural municipal elected officials and senior administrators to recognize dedicated service to their communities. Awards were distributed for nine, 15, 20, 25, 30, and a whopping 40 years of municipal service!

The RMA and the Society of Local Government Managers jointly presented the R.W. Hay Award to Camrose County CAO Paul King. The R.W. Hay Award is awarded annually to recognize an outstanding rural municipal administrator who goes above and beyond to support their municipality and broader community. With decades of service to Camrose County in a variety of roles, Mr. King is extremely deserving!



KEYNOTE SPEAKER: GENERAL RICK HILLIER

General Rick Hillier spoke about what it means to be an effective leader. He shared stories from his time in the military that highlighted the need for leaders to build trust and respect with those that they lead. Doing so will reward leaders with the best their team has to offer.



ADDRESS FROM THE PROVINCE: HONOURABLE REBECCA SCHULZ, MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Rebecca Schulz, Minister of Municipal Affairs, gave her first address to RMA members in her new role. Minister Schulz emphasized her ministry will respect the responsibility of municipalities to address local concerns. To assist with supporting local initiatives, Minister Schulz announced the reinstatement of the Fire Services Training Grant, which provides funding to train local fire fighters. This grant will receive \$500,000 in funding.

Minister Schulz also acknowledged the financial situation rural municipalities are in, and reiterated that working to address the issue of unpaid property taxes by oil and gas companies continues to be a priority for her ministry. She also emphasized that the Provincial Education Requisition Credit (PERC), which reimburses municipalities for the uncollected education component of property taxes, will be available again in 2023.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Dee Ann Benard, Chief Executive Officer of Rural Development Network (RDN), described the vital role that RDN plays in empowering rural communities by facilitating and providing access to trusted rural development expertise. She emphasised that RDN's community-based approaches and initiatives, including sustainable housing, rural health and wellness, rural immigration, etc., aim to promote sustainable rural development, particularly through the connection of stakeholder groups and the application of research results to rural issues.

ALBERTA ROADBUILDERS AND HEAVY CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

The Alberta Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association (ARCHA) represents many of the contractors that complete major works for RMA members and the province. ARCHA CEO Ron Glen shared information on the value of regular maintenance, as doing so is substantially more economical than letting roads fall into such disrepair that they need to be fully rebuilt. He also presented ARCHA's proposal for replacing the current annual provincial capital budgeting process with the creation of an arms-length agency that can plan and budget for long-term maintenance and expansion of the province's road network.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA

Dr. Susan Prendergast, President of the Nurse Practitioners Association of Alberta (NPAA), and Jennifer Mador, Vice President of NPAA, spoke to the importance of nurse practitioners to rural healthcare. Both Dr. Prendergast and Ms. Mador emphasized the role of NPs in solving Alberta's healthcare deficit. The NPAA is seeking to increase the understanding of the role NPs can have in the community and their proposal to the Government of Alberta for a new funding model to support NPs providing direct primary care services in communities which may lack rural doctors.

WOMEN IN LOCAL LEADERSHIP NETWORKING LUNCH

Led by RMA District 2 Director Amber Link and Director of External Relations & Advocacy Tasha Blumenthal, the RMA's first Women in Local Leadership Networking Lunch provided an opportunity for RMA members to build relationships and engage in informal discussion about their experiences in municipal politics. Fostering positive relationships is key and the RMA looks forward to future opportunities to encourage mentorship and support members in building their peer networks.

ALBERTA ENERGY REGULATOR

Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) President Laurie Pushor spoke about the work that the AER is currently undertaking and its ongoing commitment to supporting a strong and responsible energy sector. President Pushor spoke specifically to the closing programs which are being transitioned this year from the Site Rehabilitation Program to the Closure Nomination Program, an important issue to many RMA members. Further, President Pushor spoke to the activities of the AER in supporting the economic diversification of the region, including brine-hosted materials, hard minerals, and geothermal energy.

RCMP DEPUTY COMMISSIONER CURTIS ZABLOCKI

RCMP "K" Division Deputy Commissioner Curtis Zablocki updated members on the division's work. This includes prioritizing community policing to increase public safety and the implementation of the community safety and well-being branch. Deputy Commissioner Zablocki also spoke about the RCMP's work to increase the role of local leaders, including RMA members, in selecting detachment commanders and providing input into local policing priorities.

RMA STRATEGIC PLANNING

Every four years, the RMA develops a new strategic plan through engagement with members, staff, and the Board of Directors. The RMA kicked off the development process for the 2023 – 2027 strategic plan during the convention with a preliminary member engagement session. RMA Executive Director Gerald Rhodes led members through a real-time survey requesting input on whether the RMA's current mission, vision, values, and roles resonate with members. The survey responses will be used to support further virtual engagement with members and lead to a new strategic approach beginning in 2023.



- ### Role 2: Facilitating Networking & Education
- Strategic Priority: Providing education and sharing best practices
- ◆ Convention workshops
 - ◆ Munis 101 & EOEP course delivery
 - ◆ Member townhalls and webinars
 - ◆ Asset management cohorts
 - ◆ Virtual RiskPro sessions



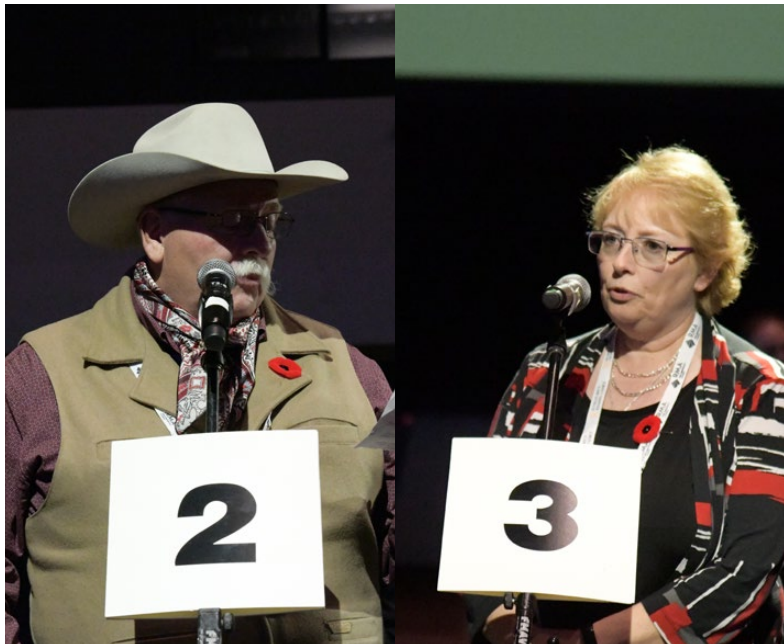
A photograph of Danielle Smith, Premier of Alberta, speaking at a podium. She is wearing a dark blue blazer over a light-colored top, a pearl necklace, and a red poppy pin. The background is a blurred stage with blue and green lighting.

HONOURABLE DANIELLE SMITH, PREMIER OF ALBERTA

Danielle Smith took the main stage for the first time as the Premier of Alberta. Premier Smith spoke on a range of topics concerning municipalities and outlined her priorities for the upcoming legislative session. These priorities include addressing affordability, healthcare and emergency medical services reform, and her promised *Alberta Sovereignty Act*.

Premier Smith advised RMA members that, while a resolution was passed at the UCP AGM regarding requiring municipal leaders to register as lobbyists, no decision has been made by the government about how to proceed.

On the topic of municipal funding, Premier Smith confirmed a commitment to tie the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF) to provincial revenues, allowing municipalities to share in the province's fiscal ups and downs. Premier Smith also addressed red tape, concluding with a request to municipalities to reduce permit approval times to assist with economic development.



MINISTERIAL FORUM

The RMA hosted several members of the Government of Alberta Cabinet during two ministerial forums. The ministers addressed questions from RMA members on several topics, including:

- ◆ Funding for Regional Economic Development Agencies (REDAs)
- ◆ Accessibility of funding for municipalities to promote rural broadband
- ◆ Lodge Assistance Program Grant funding levels
- ◆ The role of tourism in rural economic development
- ◆ Delays with regards to public land transfers
- ◆ Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program (STIP) funding
- ◆ Mental health support for children
- ◆ Supports for training and retaining rural professionals



BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Four breakout sessions were held at the RMA 2022 Fall Convention. They included:

Getting What You're Owed: Learning About Special Liens and Other Tax Recovery Tools

As unpaid oil and gas property taxes continue to be an issue for many rural municipalities, the RMA is partnering with Brownlee LLP to develop a member guide on how to better understand and utilize special lien powers and other tax recovery tools.

This workshop, led by Brownlee's Gregory Plester and Curtis Auch, provided an overview of tax recovery tools available to municipalities and requested member input on unanswered questions related to use of the tools to inform the development of the guide.

Municipal Restructuring: An Alternative Dialogue

As municipalities face increasingly complex and diverse challenges, municipal restructuring is often discussed as a possible solution. While restructuring in the form of dissolution, amalgamation, or annexation is an option to address municipal challenges, before considering such a significant change to municipal governance and identity, it is important for a municipality to understand the challenge and the full range of possible solutions.

This workshop, led by Urban Systems Community Consultant Chris Ulmer, led participants through the RMA's recent report titled *Municipal Restructuring: An Alternative Dialogue*, to better understand common challenges facing municipalities today, and how restructuring could be considered within a suite of solutions.

Making Codes of Conduct Work for Your Council

Municipal codes of conduct continue to be a topic of interest for many RMA members. Although codes of conduct are legally mandated through the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA), many aspects of the code can be determined by the council itself.

In this session, Alifeyah Gulamhusein from Brownlee LLP focused on how to develop a code of conduct which will accurately represent the council and effectively balance accountability with flexibility. Mentioned in the workshop was the need to determine what issues can be resolved informally and what issues warrant formal investigation or sanction through the code. The workshop also covered appropriate sanction and review processes.

Building Trust in Municipalities: Why a Strong Public Relations Strategy is Essential

The world has transitioned to 24/7 communications, particularly with the ubiquity of social media. Municipalities need a plan to address social media communications to ensure they respond appropriately. A strong public relations strategy will position municipalities to respond quickly and effectively in all scenarios, including emergencies. Kathryn Kolaczek of Alchemy Communication shared her experiences and insight on the importance of developing a communications plan before it becomes necessary.



RESOLUTIONS

The business portion of the RMA convention includes the resolutions session, which allows members to vote on resolutions brought forward by member municipalities. Each endorsed resolution becomes the marching orders of the RMA for three years. Active and past resolutions can be found on the RMA resolutions database at [RMAAlberta.com](https://www.rmaalberta.com).



RESOLUTIONS (CONT'D)

The following resolutions were endorsed at the RMA 2022 Fall Convention.

1-22F	Volunteer Firefighters as Medical First Responders <i>Ponoka County</i>	13-22F	Enhanced Wetland Replacement Program <i>Smoky Lake County</i>
2-22F	Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists Training for Rural Healthcare <i>Mountain View County</i>	14-22F	Third Party Inspections for Gravel Pit Reclamation <i>Stettler County</i>
3-22F	Provide for a Uniform Method of Auditing and Enforcing Compliance with Community Aggregate Payment Levy Bylaws <i>Stettler County</i>	16-22F	Exemption of Natural Gas and Propane for Agriculture Under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act <i>Parkland County</i>
4-22F	Well Drilling Equipment Tax Regulation <i>Athabasca County</i>	17-22F	Government Funding for Nurse Practitioners <i>Beaver County</i>
5-22F	Fertilizer Emission Reduction Target Impacts <i>MD of Taber</i>	18-22F	Regulations for Motorists Passing School Buses with Amber Lights Flashing <i>Clearwater County</i>
6-22F	Financial Burden of Emergency Service Response on Crown Lands <i>MD of Bighorn</i>	19-22F	Portion of Funding from Public Lands Camping Pass Directed to Municipalities <i>Clearwater County</i>
7-22F	Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Reform <i>Brazeau County</i>	20-22F	Lost Road Closure Files <i>Smoky Lake County</i>
8-22F	Rural Mental Health Advocacy <i>Yellowhead County</i>	21-22F	Loss of Agricultural Land to Renewable Energy Projects <i>Mountain View County</i>
9-22F	Renewable Energy Project Reclamation Requirements <i>Mountain View County and Foothills County</i>	23-22F	Small Scale Generation Regulation - Interconnection Challenges <i>MD of Taber</i>
10-22F	Sustainability of Small Rural Schools <i>Northern Sunrise County</i>	24-22F	Improved Crop Insurance for Market Gardens <i>Red Deer County</i>
11-22F	Disparity in Electricity Distribution and Transmission Rates <i>County of Grande Prairie</i>		
12-22F	Restore Grants-in-Lieu of Taxes for Public Housing Management Authorities <i>Big Lakes County</i>		

Welcome to

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CLOSING CEREMONIES

The convention closed with the awarding of Municipal Elected Leaders Certificates (MELCs). Elected officials who take all seven Elected Officials Education Program (EOEP) courses will earn their MELC, which is offered in partnership with the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus. In addition, President McLauchlin thanked all members for their attendance and encouraged everyone to return to Edmonton in March for the 2023 Spring Convention.