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Resolution 1-23S

Enhanced Support for Receiving Municipalities in Dissolutions

Parkland County

Carried as amended

Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs

WHEREAS dissolution occurs when a municipality ceases to operate or exist as a municipality or municipal corporation; and

WHEREAS the *Municipal Government Act* stipulates the dissolution process, which includes a viability review and vote of the electors; and

WHEREAS the decision taken by the Government of Alberta to have another municipality take over governance of the area may have significant financial impacts on that municipality; and

WHEREAS the dissolving municipality that is deemed not viable creates a liability for the receiving municipality; and

WHEREAS issues that render the dissolving municipality as not viable are not rectified prior to dissolution, but rather inherited by the receiving municipality; and

WHEREAS dissolving municipalities carry significant capital costs, including infrastructure deficits as well as debt and operational costs that the receiving municipality must address; and

WHEREAS the dissolution of an urban municipality places an unfair financial burden on the receiving municipality;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate that the Government of Alberta review the total financial compensation, timelines, process, and other support provided to receiving municipalities to better mitigate and manage the immediate and ongoing impacts resulting from the dissolution or amalgamation process.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

While the focus of the dissolution process is on the dissolving municipality and assessing its viability, the receiving municipality goes through significant changes and is often required to take on additional responsibilities once the former municipality has been absorbed into the surrounding receiving municipality. These significant changes and additional responsibilities include reviewing and aligning levels of service, organizational capacity, facilities, fleet, infrastructure condition, legal files, accounting records, employee files, and policies and planning documents. Considerable effort is also required to communicate with current and new municipal residents. These efforts require significant staff time, already subject to organizational capacity constraints, and financial investment. There is a significant administrative burden associated with absorbing a dissolved municipality. The receiving municipality must review human resource elements, legal files, bylaws, policies, assets, and all other aspects of municipal administration. There is no clear toolkit or process for how to undertake this review and integration.

Sustainability is the largest concern for a receiving municipality. Often a municipality is deemed not viable when its annual operating expenditures continually exceed operating revenues. This may be the result of

over-expenditure or under-taxation, or it could be the result of a large-scale event such as a loss of a significant tax revenue source. These issues are not rectified prior to dissolution but inherited by the receiving municipality. This creates a liability for the receiving municipality from the outset.

As such, the receiving municipality not only needs to complete the work of aligning and absorbing the dissolving municipality but also of determining how to make it viable while minimizing the impact on current and inherited taxpayers. This is further complicated by taxation limitations for most municipalities. In the case of Parkland County, taxation revenue for the dissolved Village for Wabamun was nearly halved due to the *Municipal Government Act* requirement for a single tax rate. Often, difficult discussions and decisions on level of service are required following a dissolution.

Further to ongoing operating losses, dissolving municipalities frequently carry significant capital costs. When a municipality is struggling to pay operating costs, it is not unusual for capital projects and maintenance to be deferred. This creates infrastructure deficits that the receiving municipality must address. Similarly, significant capital projects leading up to a dissolution can increase debt and/or operational and maintenance costs. These commitments are also left to the receiving municipality to address. Although there is some relief provided by the provincial government in terms of debt, it is a set amount that may or may not be sufficient in each instance of dissolution.

Parkland County has experienced two dissolutions in recent history:

1. The Village of Entwistle in 2000
2. The Village of Wabamun in 2021

In 2021, Parkland County received a \$1.2 million Alberta Community Partnership (ACP) – Municipal Restructuring (post-restructuring) grant to support the Wabamun dissolution. To date, total financial costs regarding this dissolution are \$817,495, which does not include tax revenue losses or the cost of staff time. Costs associated with infrastructure deficit and future replacement are still being calculated. At this time, capital expenditure and utility capital forecasts estimate a required investment of \$18.6 million between 2023 and 2025 in emerging capital projects to support the future sustainability of the hamlet.

The transitional and infrastructure/debt servicing streams (post-restructuring) of the ACP program provide up to \$1.2 million in funding to receiving municipalities (up to \$250,000 for transitional operating expenses and \$950,000 for infrastructure and debt servicing capital expenses). The dissolution of Wabamun above illustrates that this funding is insufficient to cover both short and long term impacts this dissolution has and will continue to have on Parkland County.

Inadequate infrastructure funding as a result of municipal dissolution is not a new issue. In 2013, Camrose County presented a resolution regarding water and wastewater infrastructure funding based on challenges they encountered with their newest hamlet of New Norway.

Municipal structures and the role of municipal restructuring have received increased attention in recent years as municipalities grapple with their sustainability. In October 2022, RMA released *Municipal Structures: An Alternative Dialogue for Municipalities in Alberta*, a report and self-assessment tool that touches on dissolution and poses questions and considerations for municipalities to address when identifying if municipal restructuring is the best solution for a given challenge or issue as opposed to a single threshold or formula.

In conclusion, as smaller urban municipalities continue to confront major operating challenges threatening their viability, the lack of adequate provincial funding support to address both short- and long-term impacts of absorbing a dissolved municipality is a major concern for rural municipalities. Receiving municipalities will have their capacity challenged when attempting to undertake the transition process and the ongoing operational requirements of the dissolving municipality. They must also solve the issue of why the dissolving municipality was not viable in the first place. Lastly, receiving municipalities must determine how they can remain sustainable with various imbalances such as infrastructure deficits that often require long range financial planning. Receiving adequate compensation from the Government of Alberta for the new challenges and issues imposed upon them by the dissolving municipality would go a long way to ensure the newly expanded municipality does not suffer the same fate.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 2-23S

Provincial Funding Stream for Non-Residential Infrastructure

Wheatland County

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs, Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors, Alberta Infrastructure

WHEREAS in recent years, municipalities have experienced challenges in obtaining funding to support investment in infrastructure to promote industrial economic development; and

WHEREAS long-term funding for capital infrastructure can create strong, dynamic, and inclusive communities; and

WHEREAS critical capital infrastructure in rural communities goes beyond public transit, and includes new roads, bridges, stormwater management, water and wastewater treatment facilities that provide opportunities for new industrial development including the agricultural sector; and

WHEREAS current legislated debt limits can create barriers for critical infrastructure investment in rural communities; and

WHEREAS industrial and commercial development can ensure Albertans have access to modern, reliable services that improve their quality of life; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta's 2022 Capital Plan identifies a total three-year investment of \$20.2 billion dollars, focused on attracting private sector investment and long-term economic growth;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate that the Government of Alberta establish a dedicated provincial funding model to enable long-term investment in capital infrastructure to support industrial economic development in rural Alberta.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

Investment in critical infrastructure can help diversify local economies by providing the necessary infrastructure to support new industries and businesses. This can help to create new job opportunities and stimulate economic growth, which can have a positive impact on the overall health and prosperity of a community.

Investment in critical non-residential infrastructure also aligns with the Government of Alberta's platform of job creation and diversification of the economy. By providing the necessary infrastructure to support new industries and businesses, these investments can help to create new job opportunities and stimulate economic growth across the province. This alignment can help to create a more resilient and robust economy.

Adding non-residential development to a rural municipality can also help to keep families in their home communities by providing local job opportunities. This can help to reduce the need for residents to seek employment in other areas, which can help to maintain the social and economic fabric of these communities.

Non-residential development can also help to diversify the assessment base in municipalities. Many municipalities experience erosion in their assessment base due to the treatment of linear assessment, which can make it difficult to maintain and improve critical infrastructure without significant tax increases to existing ratepayers. Non-residential development can help to offset this erosion by adding new sources of assessment to the municipality.

In January 2018, the Rural Municipalities of Alberta released a report titled *The Economic Contribution of Rural Alberta*, which highlighted the significant economic contributions of rural Alberta. Despite only comprising 18% of the provincial population, rural Alberta is home to 41% of public and private investment in the province and accounts for 26% of the provincial Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

There are currently some programs, such as the Alberta Municipal Water/Wastewater Partnership (AMWWP), that provide funding opportunities for critical infrastructure within eligible hamlets. However, country residential subdivisions, condominium associations, and private developments are not eligible for this funding in accordance with AMWWP requirements. To mitigate potential land use conflicts and limit disturbances to residents, rural municipalities often encourage the development of intensive industrial uses within other appropriate areas, rather than within hamlets populated with residents.

The Government of Alberta has allotted \$722 million of funding for the first year of the Local Government Fiscal Framework, which will replace the Municipal Sustainability Initiative in 2024-25. This funding will be divided and distributed among all municipalities in the province and primarily used for repairs and replacements of infrastructure. A small percentage of this funding will be used to create new economic development opportunities in rural Alberta.

The upfront financial risk of investing in critical infrastructure can be a significant barrier for many municipalities. These investments can be expensive, and the financial burden is often shouldered solely by the municipality. This can be a particularly daunting prospect for smaller municipalities with limited resources.

Debt limits, which are defined in Alberta Regulation 255/00 as 1.5 times the revenue of the municipality, can also be a hindrance for municipalities seeking to invest in critical infrastructure. These limits can restrict the amount of debt that a municipality can take on, which can make it difficult for them to finance these types of projects. It can also lead to a municipality investing in small phases of infrastructure, which may be less efficient and more costly for the long term.

A provincial funding stream for critical infrastructure will help to alleviate these barriers by providing financial support to municipalities that are considering these investments. This can help to reduce the risk associated with investing in critical infrastructure, making it more feasible for municipalities to pursue these projects. It can also help to mitigate the impact of debt limits by providing an alternative source of funding.

A provincial funding stream can also help to ensure that critical infrastructure investments are made in a strategic and coordinated manner. This can help to ensure that these investments are aligned with the broader economic development goals of the province, and that they are distributed in a way that maximizes their impact on local economies.

A provincial funding stream for critical infrastructure can be an effective way to support the diversification of local economies, job creation, and the alignment with the Government of Alberta's economic development goals. By providing financial support and helping to coordinate these investments, a provincial funding stream can help to create the necessary conditions for economic growth and prosperity in communities across the province.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 3-23S

Amendments to the National Building Code

Mackenzie County

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs

WHEREAS Alberta Municipal Affairs administers the *Safety Codes Act*, which establishes a legislative framework for the development of safety codes and the delivery of safety code services for municipalities, industry and the public in Alberta; and

WHEREAS Alberta Municipal Affairs is supported by the Safety Codes Council, which makes recommendations on public safety to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and accredits municipalities, corporations and agencies to deliver inspection, permitting and enforcement services as well as train and certify safety code officers; and

WHEREAS in Canada, provincial and territorial governments have the authority to enact legislation that regulates building design and construction within their jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS this legislation may include the adoption of the **National Building Code** (NBC) without change or with modifications to suit local needs, and the enactment of other laws and regulations regarding building design and construction, including the requirements for professional involvement; and

WHEREAS the NBC is a model code that helps promote consistency among provincial and territorial building codes; and

WHEREAS the **Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes** (CCBFC) is responsible for the content of the National Model Codes; and

WHEREAS Codes Canada (formerly named the Canadian Codes Centre) of the **National Research Council** (NRC) provides technical and administrative support to the CCBFC and its standing committees; and

WHEREAS the NRC publishes periodic revisions to the National Model Codes to address pressing issues; and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada has committed to developing a net-zero emissions model building code for provincial/territorial adoption; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Board for Harmonized Construction Codes has agreed that the National Model Codes include an objective for **greenhouse gas** (GHG) emissions reduction to enable provincial and territorial regulation, and this objective should be incorporated into the 2025 codes; and

WHEREAS this objective will affect Albertans' use of fossil fuels to heat homes, appliances, and the use of cogeneration that is needed for electricity, with the goal of eliminating all GHG emissions on site; and

WHEREAS this objective will affect Alberta's use of purchased electricity such as electric equipment, and equipment that uses purchased energy, district heating and cooling, with the goal of eliminating GHG emissions off site; and

WHEREAS the implementation of a net-zero emissions model will lead to a significant escalation in costs for new buildings and challenges to home affordability;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to ensure that the proposed changes to incorporate greenhouse gas emissions reduction into the National Building Code consider the negative effects to all Albertans, specifically rural Albertans and their quality of life; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA advocate to the Government of Alberta and the Safety Codes Council to participate in the consultation process related to updating the National Model Codes to ensure that the needs of Albertans are at the forefront; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate to the Government of Alberta to not incorporate net-zero emissions code requirements into the 2025 National Building Code – Alberta Edition (NBC(AE)).

MEMBER BACKGROUND

The Canadian Board for Harmonized Construction Codes (CBHCC) has agreed that the National Model Codes include an objective for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to enable provincial and territorial regulation, and this objective should be incorporated into the 2025 codes.

In the initial stages of developing this policy framework, provinces and territories (PTs) noted a number of elements for consideration, including:

- principles and factors that all PTs agree on (e.g., ultimate goal and net zero emission definition, emission factors);
- the need to accommodate the breadth of PT fuel policies, plans and individual PT targets, and coordinate with elements that extend beyond the boundary of the code;
- regional differences (e.g., ability to fuel switch, availability of low embodied carbon materials in Northern and remote areas);
- the boundary of operational emissions (e.g., address scope 1 only? Or address both scope 1 and scope 2 emissions?) and embodied emissions (i.e., determine standard method of analysis);
- impact on affordability (e.g., interplay between energy efficiency and GHG requirements with respect to operational GHG emissions);
- development and availability of data (e.g., better granularity of emission factors for operational carbon, better availability of Environmental Product Declarations for embodied carbon, standard method of analysis for embodied carbon);
- implementation approach (e.g., phased approach, flexible approach to address specific needs of PTs);
- adoption and implementation considerations including market readiness, training, capacity building (monitoring, reviewing and enforcement), and developing tools to enable PTs to harmonize.

Prior to the transition to the new Harmonized Code Development System, the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes (CCBFC) agreed to ask the standing committees to start working on developing technical requirements that would address GHG emissions in parallel to the ongoing policy work to:

- address the eight policy elements identified by PTs, and
- develop language for a new GHG objective.

In November 2022, the CBHCC adopted the direction set by Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes, including:

- developing objective(s) to address GHG emissions for inclusion in the 2025 National Model Codes;
- developing proposed technical requirements related to operational GHG emissions for inclusion in the 2025 National Model Codes;
- developing proposed technical requirements related to embodied GHG emissions for inclusion in the 2030 National Model Codes; and
- undertaking policy work, and objective and technical development in parallel.

The CBHCC is seeking input from stakeholders, experts, code users, and the general public on the draft policy recommendations before finalizing the policy framework. The draft policy recommendations will also be provided to the relevant standing committee(s) for discussion.

- Consultation wave 1 begins on February 6, 2023 and ends on March 30, 2023.
- Consultation wave 2 is planned to begin in March 2023 and end in May 2023.

Note that this consultation period is subject to change as the CBHCC is still working on the draft policy recommendation.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 4-23S

Strategic Direction for the RMA

Rural Municipalities of Alberta

Carried

WHEREAS the **Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA)** is a member-driven organization; and

WHEREAS setting strategic direction is an important process in establishing a clear picture of organizational expectations in serving members and clients; and

WHEREAS a member approved strategic direction will guide the RMA Board of Directors and staff in developing a strategic plan in which association activities will align with strategic priorities; and

WHEREAS the RMA's current strategic direction expires in 2023;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) adopts the Strategic Direction as presented at the Spring 2023 Convention to guide the planning and activities for the organization from 2023 through 2027; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA review the strategic direction next in 2027.

RMA BACKGROUND

The RMA last underwent a strategic direction setting process in 2019 to revise the mission vision, values, roles and strategic priorities to guide the RMA's activities from March 2019 until 2023.

To obtain member input to refresh the RMA's strategic direction, members were invited to provide input at the Fall 2022 Convention through live voting. Based on input received at the Fall 2022 Convention, a member survey was distributed, requesting additional feedback. The RMA board reviewed member input and undertook an engagement session to revisit all elements of the strategic direction. These strategic planning sessions invited valuable input from our members and board, and resulted in the development of a proposed strategic direction to guide the planning and activities of the RMA. The RMA's draft strategic direction was distributed to the membership for feedback in February 2023.

The purpose of the strategic direction is to establish an updated vision and mission for the association, as well as values, roles, and strategic priorities that will best position the RMA to continue to serve the needs of its members in the future. It is intended to reflect the RMA's diverse member offerings and its role as a provider of advocacy and business services. The strategic direction will form the basis upon which the RMA's strategic plan will be built, to identify goals, initiatives and measures in alignment with key direction provided by our members.

The draft strategic direction is included in this resolution background.

Draft Strategic Direction

The following vision, mission, values, roles and strategic priorities will guide the planning and activities for the RMA.

VISION

Strong, uniquely rural communities and resilient rural lands that support and drive Alberta.

MISSION

Strengthening rural Alberta through effective advocacy and valued services.

VALUES

The RMA is committed to the following values:

- Leading in a proactive, solutions-focused and accountable manner
- Being relationship-focused and foster collaboration
- Interacting with civility as a non-partisan and respectful organization
- Communicating with intention and integrity
- Continuously improving as an innovative organization
- Engaging openly and transparently

ROLES & STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We represent and serve our members by:

ROLE	PRIORITIES
1. Championing and advocating on municipal and rural issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elevating the rural profile ▪ Engaging our members to identify emerging issues and needs ▪ Applying a rural lens to protect the landscape ▪ Advocating on the role rural municipalities play in managing the majority of Alberta's road and bridge network
2. Facilitating networking and educational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing avenues for members education ▪ Encouraging member networking opportunities to support capacity building
3. Being a resource of credible knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conducting research to understand issues and support evidence-based decision making ▪ Sharing best practices ▪ Fostering good governance
4. Delivering competitive business services including insurance, risk management and procurement expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing procurement expertise and risk management solutions valued by our members to meet their needs ▪ Ensuring legislative compliance ▪ Providing sustainable service delivery ▪ Providing unique alternative risk transfer options ▪ Providing services to support rural non-profit organizations

5. Cultivating strategic and collaborative partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fostering strategic partnerships to meet shared goals ▪ Continuing to enhance the RMA brand and value proposition to strengthen the organization ▪ Identifying opportunity to advance issues through collaboration
6. Effectively leading RMA through insightful leadership and effective internal operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing RMA leadership and governance ▪ Investing in technology to enhance efficiency ▪ Offering professional development opportunities to support learning and growth ▪ Continuing to invest in the organization's culture

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 5-23S

Access to Mobile Wireless (Cellular) Services

County of Barrhead

Carried

Advocacy Target: Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission

WHEREAS Albertans rely on mobile wireless (cellular) services to conduct business activities, for personal use, and in emergency situations; and

WHEREAS the *Telecommunications Act* affirms that the Canadian telecommunications policy has an objective “to render reliable and affordable telecommunications services of high quality accessible to Canadians in both urban and rural regions in all regions of Canada”; and

WHEREAS the **Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)** made access to mobile wireless voice and internet services part of a nation-wide service objective for telecommunications services in 2016; and

WHEREAS the CRTC has a target of 100% of all Canadian households having access to the latest generally deployed mobile wireless technology (currently defined as long-term evolution [LTE]) by December 2026; and

WHEREAS despite CRTC reporting that more than 99% of all Albertans have access to cellular services, Albertans outside of urban centres do not have access to reliable cellular network coverage; and

WHEREAS access to landlines and high-speed internet is challenging in rural and remote areas which further increases the importance of reliable mobile wireless (cellular) services;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta engage the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to address the lack of reliable cellular network coverage for mobile wireless (cellular) service.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

The County of Barrhead is a rural municipality located northwest of Edmonton. Like many other municipalities, County of Barrhead is partnering with internet service providers to improve broadband services in rural Alberta. However, access to reliable cellular network is still lacking.

There are several telecommunications providers offering mobile wireless voice and internet services. Despite telecommunications providers offering services, there are areas within the County of Barrhead that do not have reliable cellular network coverage.

The County of Barrhead is not unique in Alberta as the lack of reliable cellular network coverage is experienced by residents and businesses in rural municipalities that are at a distance from the higher populated urban centers.

Residents and business owners in the County of Barrhead have raised concerns about their ability to operate their businesses due to challenges with telecommunications. Today many residents and businesses in rural Alberta are not being serviced by landlines or being refused service. Therefore, reliance on mobile

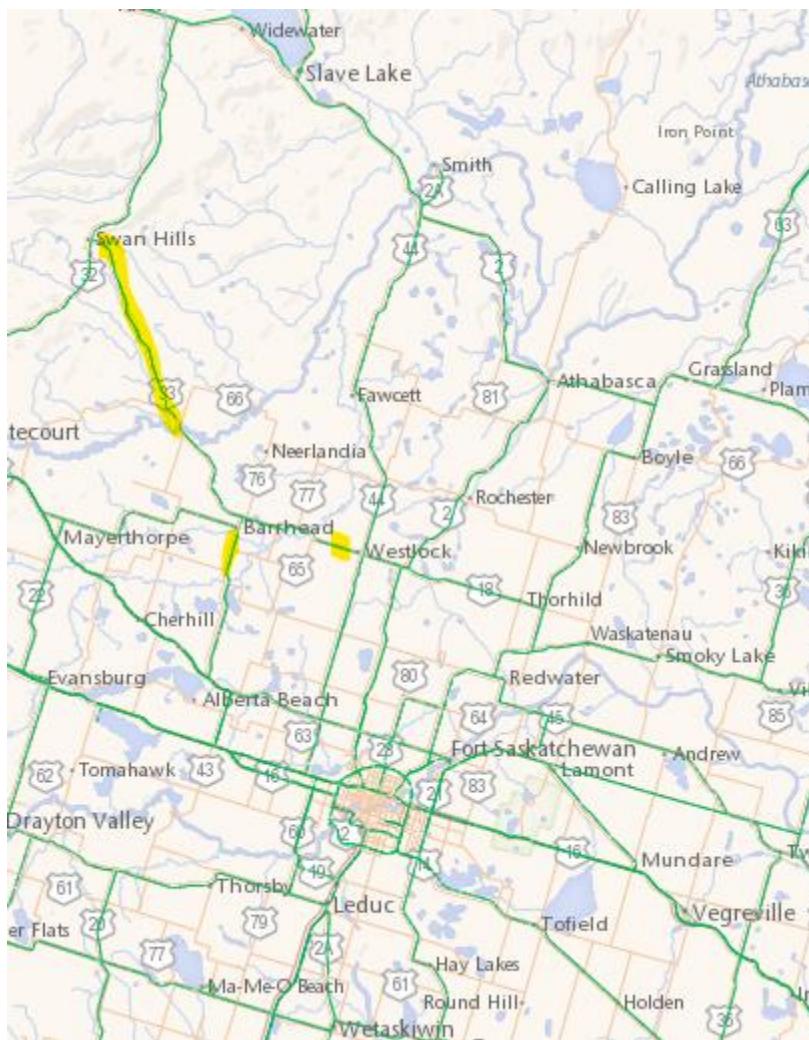
wireless (cellular) services becomes their only option. However, when a business must rely on high spots on the property to receive and send cellular calls it makes it difficult for business owners to operate and grow their business. Even the more densely populated areas within the County, such as the hamlets of Thunder Lake and Neerlandia, report experience with spotty service and dropped calls.

Area residents understand and share the same frustrations of unreliable network coverage, but it is difficult for urban customers and vendors to understand the telecommunication limitations that businesses in rural communities face.

Even more importantly, emergency situations require reliable cellular network coverage. Rural and remote areas are at risk of emergency situations becoming critical when there is no access to 911.

The CRTC provides reports on “Major Roads With & Without LTE Services” that support cellular networks. Most major roads in Alberta are identified by the CRTC as having LTE service. However, the data does not accurately reflect the reliability of the service. For example, Highway 18 is marked as having LTE service, however there is a location between Barrhead and Westlock with no cellular access or a dead spot. The same is true on Highway 33 between areas heading west to Swan Hills and south to Edmonton (marked on the map).

- Major roads with LTE
- Major roads without LTE

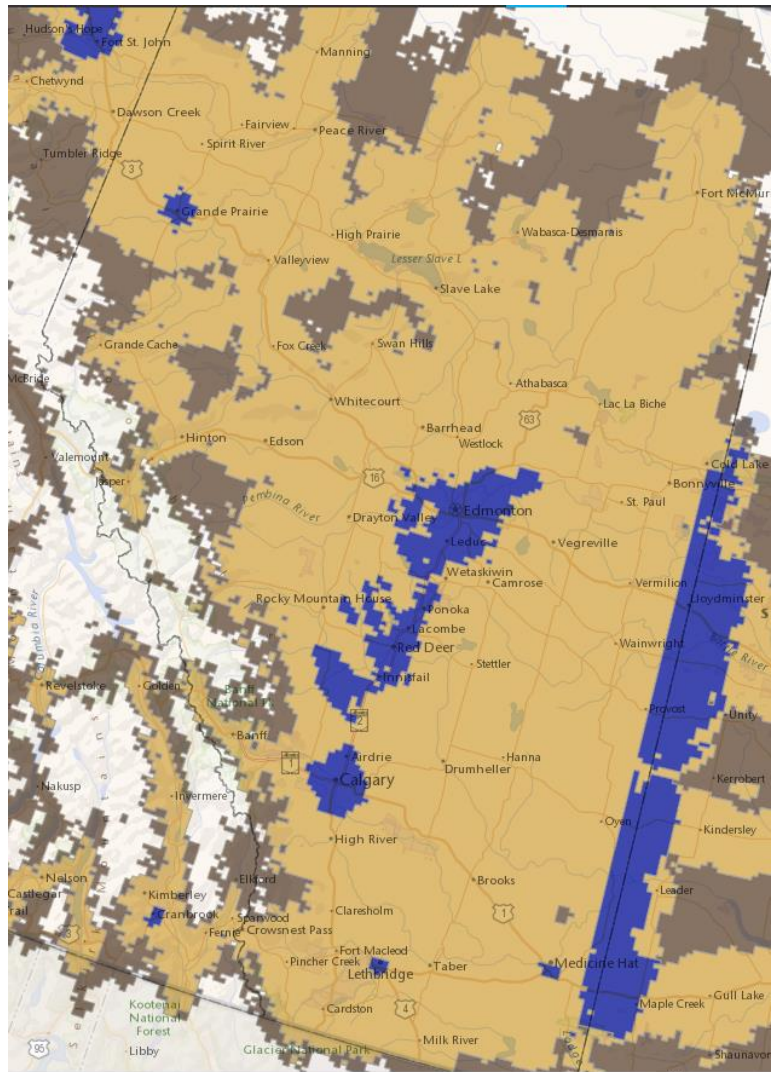


Source:

https://crtc.gc.ca/cartovista/RoadsWithAndWithoutLTE_En/index.html

CRTC also reports on “LTE Service Coverage Areas.” The area encompassing the County of Barrhead is shown as fully covered by two facility-based networks, however there are several areas within the County of Barrhead that are three-digit highways and local roads that do not have reliable coverage and experience dead spots. These dead spots occur from no coverage by service providers, no cellular signal or lack of towers.

LTE service coverage by number of facilities-based networks



Source:

https://crtc.gc.ca/cartovista/LTEProviderCountYE2019_EN/index.html

CRTC reports do not reflect the reality on the ground in rural Alberta with respect to mobile wireless (cellular) services. As a result, the lack of attention and investment leaves rural Alberta underserved which limits economic growth from many perspectives and potentially increases risk to life and property by negatively impacting emergency response.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 6-23S

Rural Access to Supports for Addictions, Homelessness and Mental Health

Northern Sunrise County

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Health, Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services, Alberta Mental Health and Addiction

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta is providing \$187 million to address addiction, homelessness, and mental health in Alberta's large urban centres; and

WHEREAS rural areas have not received a comparable level of training, support, funds, or resources to address addiction, homelessness, and mental health; and

WHEREAS every Albertan, no matter their circumstance, deserves the opportunity to pursue recovery from addiction, and pre-treatment programs can serve as a bridge between detox and treatment for those seeking recovery from addiction; and

WHEREAS the most common factors contributing to persons being homeless are lack of money, unaffordable rent or mortgage, mental health struggles, addictions, medical conditions and job loss; and

WHEREAS there has been a steady increase in the need for shelter spaces in rural communities with limited resources available locally;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to provide funding to rural municipalities and community service organizations to address the issues of addiction, homelessness and public safety, and build on the province's recovery-oriented system of addiction and mental health care at a level similar to the funding provided to Edmonton, Calgary and other large urban centres in late 2022.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

Addiction and mental health issues are exacerbated in rural areas as there is generally a large geographical area to cover. As a result, people have to travel further for treatment and wait longer for services. Rural areas also require more workers and funding per capita than is needed in the urban centres for supporting and treating mental health and addiction.

The total number of emergency department visits in Peace River and area (six hospitals) in 2021/2022 that had an addiction/mental health presentation were over 2000, with 1400 of those visits being mental health related and 600 substance related. In 2022, the Peace River RCMP detachment made 62 transfers (a 135% increase from the previous year) to convey a person with addiction/mental health presentation to a designated facility in Grande Prairie and/or Edmonton. This uses up many hours of the officers' time, in addition to the many hours responding to call outs from the public on these persons. When it comes to homelessness and understanding its causes, the larger urban experience tends to dominate the conversation due to the "visibility" of individuals experiencing homelessness. The issue of homelessness within rural and remote areas is far less understood or even acknowledged by the wider public because of its "hidden" nature. Individuals experiencing housing insecurity in rural and remote communities are more likely to couch surf, live in overcrowded housing, or own/rent housing that may need major repairs,

often leveraging the relationships around them for support. The lack of available, accurate, and current data on rural homelessness limits the ability of rural communities to advocate for better resources for their residents in greatest need.

The shelter in Peace River has 15-20 people staying there every night and this number is steadily increasing. In Peace River, when persons are released from the Peace River Correctional Center they are provided with transport into the downtown core and end up at the shelter, due to extenuating factors, which greatly increases the number of homeless in the area. In December 2022, there were 56 persons transported to Peace River from the Correctional Center.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 7-23S

Revision of the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* to provide for an Expiration Date in Conservation Easement Agreements

County of Newell

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Protected Areas

WHEREAS the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* includes provisions for a registered owner of land, by agreement, to grant a qualified organization a conservation easement as a mechanism to undertake conservation actions that support the related goals and objectives of regional plans; and

WHEREAS a landowner gives up certain rights or opportunities through a conservation easement in order to protect the conservation values of all or part of their land, which typically bind future landowners to the same land use restrictions in perpetuity; and

WHEREAS every conservation easement has potential tax and/or financial benefits that may unduly influence the land market and land use planning decisions; and

WHEREAS it is presumptuous for one generation to limit land uses in perpetuity; and

WHEREAS the interests of a grantee of a conservation easement do not necessarily align with the interests of the local community; and

WHEREAS the provisions for modifying or terminating a conservation easement provided by the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* are onerous;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta revise the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* to require that an expiration date, not exceeding 40 years, be included in conservation easement agreements to ensure future landowners can influence, and benefit from, land use decisions.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

Alberta created its first conservation easement legislation with amendments to the *Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* in 1996. In 2009, those provisions were transferred to the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*.

The County of Newell supports conservation efforts but is opposed to the perpetual nature of conservation easements and the limiting effect they will have on future landowners' ability to influence, and benefit from, land use decisions.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 8-23S

Provincial Review of Agribusiness and Agritourism

Sturgeon County

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation, Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism, Alberta Municipal Affairs

WHEREAS rural municipalities across Alberta have long supported agricultural operators and their success while preserving and protecting quality of life in the community; and

WHEREAS agritourism is a business model that is growing in popularity as agricultural producers recognize a need and opportunity to diversify their operations and supplement their incomes; and

WHEREAS there is a growing public interest to engage in rural experiences and outdoor recreational activities; and

WHEREAS by combining agriculture and tourism, agritourism offers rural experiences to urban residents, opportunities for cultural exchange, and economic diversification for farmers; and

WHEREAS farmers who wish to grow or diversify their operations through agritourism are subject to financial and regulatory requirements, which can impact the viability of their applications; and

WHEREAS when considering agribusiness/agritourism-related development applications, municipal decision-makers must balance neighbourhood impacts and potential concerns related to greater noise, traffic, and other effects that could change the overall character of a community;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to undertake a joint provincial/municipal review of agribusiness and agritourism operations that includes considerations related to sector promotion and incentivization, municipal/provincial regulatory alignments, potential transitional building code or taxation options for operators, and other matters to help clarify and align the responsible growth of these value-added sectors in Alberta.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

The agriculture industry is evolving. While enhancing local food security remains an essential part of agribusiness, in recent times there is also an increasing interest and need for sector growth beyond primary production to include agriculture processing, value-added opportunities, diversification of agriculture through innovative practices, and related activities, such as agritourism.

Public sector approval processes and regulatory mechanisms have not kept pace with Alberta's social and economic shifts; in its current state, the environment does not allow for more diversified agricultural opportunities in rural communities. In fact, nearly half of Alberta farmers indicated that they had encountered difficulties in obtaining municipal approval for their agritourism operations.

This gap triggered Sturgeon County to undertake an Agribusiness/Agritourism Review in 2021 to assess its own regulatory conditions and seek input on improving investment certainty for the agricultural community, enhancing local food security, and supporting economic growth and diversification. The rising need to understand and manage the impacts of agribusiness or agritourism operations on neighbouring

properties was also reviewed based on a goal of protecting and preserving communities and rural quality of life.

The review used a community-based task force model to consider and advance the following elements:

- Evaluate the current state of agribusiness and agritourism in Sturgeon County (economic impact, real/perceived barriers to agribusiness or agritourism growth and success, and needs and expectations of businesses and landowners, etc.);
- Review local, provincial, and national agribusiness and agritourism regulatory best practices;
- Investigate and recommend appropriate licensing requirements or regulations related to hosting events on agricultural parcels;
- Evaluate the real or perceived impacts (positive and negative) that agribusiness and agritourism operations of different types and sizes have on surrounding landowners;
- Recommend and undertake an engagement and communication strategy with key stakeholders;
- Produce a “what we heard” report summarizing the consultation feedback and comments; and
- Present a final report containing the task force findings and recommendations on potential regulations and policy.

Provincial Advocacy on Agritourism

In parallel to the considerations noted above, while municipalities in Alberta have broad authority under the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) to regulate local land use and to support diversification, there are areas and gaps where municipal and provincial support requires further study and potential alignment and/or updating. Some examples include:

1. Financial and non-financial incentive programs to encourage new growth of this value-added sector;
2. Regulatory interface and coordination, from a local and provincial perspective;
3. Transitional building code or Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) requirements (considering the difficulty for agricultural operators with farm buildings to transition to commercial building code. For example, buildings that were previously exempt from code requirements, permitting, etc., as well as addressing the challenge of poor documentation);
4. Transitional taxation requirements (considering the costly infrastructure upgrades to safely accommodate high volumes of visitors); and
5. Other elements that may be identified during a review.

Promoting industry sustainability and enabling value-added options will contribute to a diversified local and provincial economy and help to ensure local food security. Local and provincial support for the continued framework development of agritourism and agribusiness should be considered an essential part of ongoing rural advocacy.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 9-23S

Rural Fixed Wing Medivac Services

MD of Spirit River

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services

WHEREAS rural Alberta is under-served by fixed wing medivac services; and

WHEREAS **Alberta Health Services** (AHS) has further reduced fixed wing air ambulance services to three rural municipalities, and potentially more, throughout the winter seasons: and

WHEREAS these municipalities have maintained airports and runways for decades that have served fixed wing aircraft without incident; and

WHEREAS AHS has cited pilot inexperience as the rationale for eliminating fixed wing air medivac services to these and potentially other rural municipalities: and

WHEREAS AHS has further cited the need for municipalities to upgrade rural airports and runways at a huge cost to the municipality to compensate for the inadequacies of the contractors' pilots: and

WHEREAS AHS claims that STARS Air Ambulance and ground transportation are suitable replacements for fixed wing service, and

WHEREAS many rural municipalities have a shortage of drivers to drive ground ambulance, resulting in extensive delays in rural patients accessing professional care, resulting in deaths and long-term health conditions; and

WHEREAS AHS has a contract with a service provider to provide fixed wing air ambulance services to rural municipalities year-round, and

WHEREAS the service provider is unable to provide adequately trained pilots to facilitate fixed wing medivac services ; and

WHEREAS the termination of rural fixed wing air ambulance services will result in deaths and long-term health issues for patients related to delays in accessing appropriate medical care:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that the Government of Alberta ensure that air ambulance service providers adhere to their existing contract and restore air ambulance service to the three municipalities that have recently lost this service either by compelling the contractor to subcontract the air ambulance service to a contractor with appropriately skilled pilots; requiring the contractor to train their existing pilots to achieve industry standards, or by providing funding to municipalities to upgrade airports to meet the new standard required for lower skilled pilots; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA request that the Government of Alberta compel Alberta Health Services (AHS) to provide any airport slated for discontinuance of any AHS transportation services a detailed analysis of necessary changes (within reason and based on industry standards) required to be made by the airport and a commitment that if those changes are completed, full transportation services will be reinstated.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

Rural municipalities have seen a steady decline in health services in our communities. Several municipalities have been compelled to build medical centers in order to attract and retain physicians in their region.

Rural municipal health centers lack not only physicians but also all levels of nurses, physiotherapists, massage therapists, health care aides, and all other forms of healthcare professions.

Rural municipal health centers face regular closures of their emergency, most often on weekends but also for extended periods, due to a lack of health care professionals.

Rural emergency response teams are frequently absent or short staffed, making ground ambulances unavailable until a driver can be located in a neighboring town or city, further delaying patient care.

Rural fire departments, most often staffed by volunteers, are facing challenges in getting new recruits, resulting in skeleton crews. As these volunteers are frequently the first responder to vehicular accidents, and can be the only responder, transportation of patients can be left in their hands.

Reliance of STARS Air Ambulance is dependent on their availability, and is restricted greatly dependent on weather.

AHS's recent announcement to cease fixed wing air ambulance for the Spirit River, Ponoka and Two Hills airports based on pilot inexperience, is one more way that AHS is not providing equitable and quality healthcare to rural Albertans.

Fixed wing medivac services have been serving these municipalities for decades with no hint of this service being removed.

In 2017, AHS negotiated a new contract for fixed wing air service across the province with predominately one company. At that time, there was discussion that this would force competing service providers out of business and with that a loss of skilled pilots. This is the situation AHS faces and with that municipalities and their ratepayers are paying the price.

In November of 2022, the Town of Spirit River received a telephone call from AHS advising that the Spirit River Airport's fixed wing medivac service is suspended for the winter and every winter moving forward. Simultaneously the towns of Ponoka and Two Hills received similar correspondence.

Reasons cited for the discontinuance were: pilot inexperience, length and width of the runway, and concerns with response times when alerting the airport of an incoming flight. The Town was further advised that the contractor's pilots were not as experienced and therefore were apprehensive about landing in Spirit River in the winter.

The Municipal District of Spirit River took a lead role in advocating for a resolution to this and the region's ratepayers' lives are at risk. Letters were written to the Premier, ministers Copping, Jean and Loewen as well as AHS CEO Dr. John Cowell.

The MD has also put in a FOIP request for a copy of the contract between the fixed wing air ambulance provider and AHS. We have not yet received that.

Ministers, and AHS response to-date has been that pilot safety is a priority and rural municipalities continue to receive quality healthcare through STARS and ground ambulance.

It should be noted numerous municipalities and organizations have also written letters.

Airports without commercial flights have few if any grants available to sustain, repair or expand expensive runways and infrastructure. If the Province is changing the requirements needed by rural airports to benefit from fixed wing air ambulance, the province needs to develop funding for municipal airports so they can sustain AHS medivac service.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 10-23S

Victim Services Delivery Model

Northern Sunrise County

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services, Alberta Justice

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta is planning to shift the governance and delivery of victim services to a four-zone model in March 2024; and

WHEREAS the four-zone model will replace the existing local victim services governance and program delivery model; and

WHEREAS the unique needs of communities within these new zones may not be addressed; and

WHEREAS stakeholders were not given the opportunity to discuss the boundaries of the new zones even though the *Recommendations on Victims Services – Report to Government* (Report) identified that any model should recognize the unique need in each area; and

WHEREAS under the four-zone model, decision-making and service delivery approaches in smaller communities may be eliminated or modified to meet the needs of larger communities within each zone; and

WHEREAS this decline in services for lesser populated areas could disproportionately affect rural Alberta; and

WHEREAS many communities will be without representation on the new zonal boards, which will further limit their ability to address the unique needs of each community; and

WHEREAS the regionalization of many other professions in Alberta has not resulted in improved service provision for clients; and

WHEREAS the new zoning model could result in significant volunteer and staffing challenges, due to the large area that a single regional manager would oversee; and

WHEREAS the funding and delivery of victim services could be downloaded to municipalities under the new zoning model; and

WHEREAS **Rural Municipalities of Alberta** (RMA) has taken the position that the current model of service delivery is effective for a large percentage of the population; and

WHEREAS the Report asserted that most stakeholders prefer to maintain the current model with increased funding levels; and

WHEREAS the Report did not document any problems with the current service delivery model, nor did it identify any existing gaps in services; and

WHEREAS the Report advised that “victims’ needs should be the number one priority” yet victims have not been given the opportunity to provide input as to what their needs are; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has not done its part in assisting those few communities that have been struggling in their effort to provide victim services;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to maintain the current model of victim services program delivery and instead provide direct assistance to the small number of communities that are struggling to operate under the current model and have insufficient services for victims; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate to the Government of Alberta for more consistent funding for the current model and the development of an approach for more consistent regional collaboration and information-sharing within the current model.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

The existing model of Victim Services Units (VSU) has worked well for 30 years engaging local board members, local volunteer advocates and local staff from their respective communities. These local police based VSUs have always had huge support from the police and their communities and are appreciated for the quality one-on-one service they are able to give victims of crime and tragedy in their communities. With the very small percentage of problems that have arisen within these current VSUs, there was never any real effort from the Government of Alberta to resolve any conflict issues. Instead, these isolated problem areas were left to deteriorate. In the past (10 years ago) a team of two provincial representatives would come to the VSU with a problem and conduct a program review to identify and resolve issues. These communities should receive the help they need, without resorting to zonal model that penalizes every other VSU that was operating effectively.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 11-23S

Reforming the Bail System to Address Rural Crime

Brazeau County

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services, Alberta Justice

WHEREAS crime has been an issue in rural Alberta for several years, frustrating residents and leading them to believe the justice system is broken as the courts appear to have a catch and release policy; and

WHEREAS rural areas are particularly vulnerable to crime, as farms and isolated houses seem to be easy targets for criminal activity; and

WHEREAS suggestions for improvements to the bail system may come from examining other provincial jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS local elected officials, police, and residents are the most knowledgeable about their communities, the rate of crime, and the characteristics of offenders; and

WHEREAS all Albertans benefit from lower crime and a fairer justice system;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to:

- a) **Require that justices receive a complete bail package, that a summary of the details of the arrest circumstances be read before the courts, and that reverse onus situations be identified;**
- b) **Increase funding to enable the Edmonton bail office to be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week;**
- c) **Advocate to the Government of Canada to amend the bail ladder system such that if an accused has not lived up to the conditions of a no cash bail from a previous charge or offence, then a judge must now move forward with a cash bail alternative for this and future offences;**
- d) **Direct the Government of Alberta to complete a cross-jurisdictional analysis of other provinces to see how they address bail packages, bail Crown offices, bail ladder systems, and any other issue that may be impacting the increase in catch and release of criminals;**
- e) **Create a bail sub-committee composed of municipal and Alberta Justice representatives to examine other bail systems, canvass Albertans on ideas for improving the justice system, and present an annual report with recommendations to the Minister of Justice.**

MEMBER BACKGROUND

See following page.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

To: Minister of Justice – Mr. Tyler Shandro

Rural Crime Committee Final Report to the Minister of Justice

June 15, 2022

Committee History:

Rural Crime has been an issue in the Drayton Valley Constituency for at least the 7 years that I have been in public office. Much of the frustration by constituents centers around a belief that the justice system is broken as the courts appear to have a catch and release policy that has meant that repeat offenders are too often let go on bail by the court only to re-offend almost immediately in the local community. This has created a great deal of concern in rural areas of the Drayton Valley – Devon constituency and Brazeau County as farms and isolated houses seem to be open picking for drug gangs as they steal to finance their habit or increase their profits. After meeting with constituents in town hall meetings it was determined that Brazeau County Counsellors and the MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon and a representative of the local RCMP detachment would meet to study the issues faced by rural police and make recommendations for changes to the bail system in Alberta.

Committee Members:

Mr. Cody Brooks – Councilor Brazeau County

Mr. Randy Swap – Councilor Brazeau County

Staff Sargent Erin Matthews – Drayton Valley RCMP Detachment

Mark Smith – MLA Drayton Valley Devon Constituency

Committee Process:

Step 1: The Committee met 3-4 times over the course of January, February and March of 2022 to talk with stakeholders and brainstorm suggestions for how to improve the bail system. Through these discussions the committee discussed a wide range of issues that included: Bail Packages, the Bail ladder, Transportation of prisoners, 24 hour releases and the need for a cross-jurisdictional analysis of how other provinces are handling these same issues.

Step 2: Rural Crime Committee then approached Justice asking for an analysis of the Rural Crime Committee's recommendations to see if they had merit. The Rural Crime Committee then reviewed the Ministry Analysis and eliminated some of the Rural Crime Committees recommendations. The Rural Crime Committee also amended some recommendations or in some cases decided to continue our support for the original recommendations.

Step 3: Final Report

- A) The Rural Crime Committee has decided to send our Final Report with its recommendations to the Minister of Justice, Mr. Tyler Shandro for his consideration and would like to meet with the Minister to discuss the merits of the recommendations.
- B) The members of the committee from Brazeau County will be taking these recommendations to the Brazeau Council with the recommendation that Brazeau Council use the recommendations as the basis for policy resolutions and debate on the floor of the RMA.
- C) MLA Smith will be taking these recommendations to the Drayton Valley-Devon Constituency Association where they will be considered by the Drayton Valley-Devon Policy Sub-Committee for submission to the UCP Provincial Policy Sub-Committee where hopefully they will be debated on the floor at the next UCP AGM.

Recommendations of the Rural Crime Committee for the Minister of Justice:

1. **Bail Packages:**

Original Rural Crime Committee Recommendation #1: Bail Packages

“Justices should be given a complete bail package with details of arrest circumstances and history of previous offences by date.

Justices or the bail Crown officer must read before the courts a summary of the details of the arrest circumstances and history of previous offences by date.”

Ministry Analysis (Black) – Rural Crime Committee Response (Blue)

- Currently, the package available to the justices of the peace (JP) in bail hearings contains the criminal record (in written form), charging Information, as well as recent release documents (if received from the police).
 - In the Provincial Court of Alberta, the criminal record is provided to the Provincial Court of Alberta judge by the prosecutor either in written form or orally, prior to or during the proceeding.
 - Crown prosecutors in the Provincial Court of Alberta or before the JP will also provide updates to the criminal record that are not yet available on Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC), either orally or with written addition to the CPIC record.
 - The package, however, does not contain a copy of the police report or the prosecutor information sheet, as these items may contain information considered inappropriate on a legal basis (e.g., inadmissible evidence that may taint the court proceedings and impact the integrity of the criminal justice system).
 - *The prosecutor Information sheet is the particulars of the offence. It is the document we use to explain to the court our grounds that the offence we as police are alleging occurred and who did it. We do not agree that this document may contain information considered inappropriate on a legal basis, it contains the elements of the offence. The current process allows the prosecutors and defence counsel to only present what they choose to the Justice and omit relevant details to ensure that their joint submission will be accepted by the sitting Justice. This puts the Justice in an unfair position when they are determining release. Having the Justice receive a copy of the prosecutor information sheet will ensure they know all the details around how the offence occurred when determining release. This was the practice in the past.*
 - As the bail system needs to be efficient, fair, and timely, having prosecutors and defence counsel present relevant information to the court is a balanced approach that serves the administration of justice.
- *See above comments.*

- Alternatively, presenting everything that a police officer or probation officer deems relevant, when they are not specifically trained in relation to matters of evidence, could potentially lead to an unbalanced or unfair proceeding in certain circumstances.
 - *While not crown prosecutors, police and probation are trained in the matters of evidence. In 99% of investigations police are the agency that determines if enough evidence exists to lay a charge, not the crown. Crown then prosecutes the file.*
- Offenders identified through law enforcement - using an objective, data-driven methodology - as those who are causing the most harm or having the most negative impact in communities are included in Integrated Offender Management (IOM).
- Crown prosecutors through their Court Packages and an upcoming flag on JOIN and PRISM - which will be named 'IOM – Integrated Offender Management', will be able to identify offenders who are part of IOM.
- The Court Package includes:
 - a summary of the current charges before the court, other outstanding charges, and release details;
 - offender involvement with social, health, justice, and police agencies;
 - services that have been offered for the offenders and engagement level with same;
 - holistic picture of the offender; and
 - demonstrates if there is a risk to public should offender be released.
- The Court Package can be used for both bail and sentencing court matters.
 - *The Integrated Habitual Offender Management (IHOM, formally IOM) is a volunteer program. Offender's have to sign a consent form to be involved in the program. As such there are very few offenders on this program.*
- When determining if bail is appropriate, a judicial officer must also apply a reverse onus requiring the accused to justify why release should be granted in cases involving:
 - allegations of the commission of an indictable offence after release has been granted in respect of another indictable offence; or
 - allegations that the accused has breached the conditions of a previous release order.
 - *Reverse Onus situations are not identified by the Crown Prosecutors and not applied by the Justice*

Final Recommendation to the Minister of Justice – Bail Packages:

- A) Justices should be given a complete bail package with details of arrest circumstances and history of previous offences by date.***

- B) Justices or the bail Crown officer must read before the courts a summary of the details of the arrest circumstances and history of previous offences by date.***
- C) Police and Probation have been trained in matters of evidence therefore the Justice should receive a copy of the prosecutor information sheet which will ensure they know all the details around how the offence occurred when determining release. This was the practice in the past.***
- D) Because the Integrated Habitual Offender Management (IHOM, formally IOM) is a volunteer program. Offender's have to sign a consent form to be involved in the program. As such there are very few offenders on this program. This is another reason why the Justice should receive a copy of the prosecutor information sheet.***
- E) Reverse Onus situations must be identified by the Crown Prosecutors and applied by the Justice.***

2. Bail Crown Office

Original Rural Crime Committee Recommendation #2: Bail Crown Office

“Either increase funding so that the Bail Office is open 24/7, 365 days of the year or allow police officers to address the setting of bail when the office is closed and a Bail Crown Officer is not available.”

Ministry Analysis:

In regards to the recommendation to allow police officers to address the setting of bail, it is important to note that:

- Prior to January 2015, police represented the Crown at 99 per cent of first instance bail hearings in Alberta.
- In light of an incident in January 2015, when RCMP Constable David Matthew Wynn was fatally shot dead by Shawn Rehn, an individual who had 30 outstanding charges and was out on bail at the time of the incident, an external review of the bail system in Alberta was triggered (i.e., *Alberta Bail Review – Endorsing a Call for Change*).
- Recommendations and accompanying analysis in the Alberta Bail Review (the Review) questioned the legal authority of police to present at first appearance bail hearings before JPs.

The Review concluded that police did not have the necessary authority to do so under the *Criminal Code*.

- In response to these recommendations, and to obtain legal clarity on this issue, Alberta Justice and Solicitor General (via the Attorney General),

asked the court to determine if police officers had the authority to appear as prosecutors on bail hearings.

- On February 3, 2017, the Court of Queen's Bench released its decision on the legal status of police presenting officers to act as prosecutors for the purposes of first appearance bail hearings before JPs. Former Chief Justice Neil Wittmann concluded that police officers do not have the authority to appear as prosecutors at bail hearings where indictable offences are charged. Also, ministerial orders are not sufficient to give police the authority to appear as prosecutors at first appearance bail hearings.
- The court's decision meant that Crown prosecutors—instead of police—must attend first appearance bail hearings.
- Currently, Crown Bail Offices operate 365 days per year between 8 a.m. and midnight.
- Under the current operating hours of the Crown Bail Offices, the percentage of over-holds in Alberta (i.e., detention of an arrestee longer than 24 hours prior to being brought before a JP) from April 2021 to March 2022 is approximately 1.08 per cent.

Final Recommendation to the Minister of Justice – Bail Crown Office:

Our committee concluded that with increased funding the bail office in Edmonton could be open 24/7 just as the Calgary office is which would increase the efficiency of the bail system.

3. Bail Ladder:

Original Rural Crime Committee Recommendation #3: Bail Ladder

"If the accused has not lived up to the conditions of a no cash bail from a previous charge or offence then the judge must now move forward with a cash bail alternative for this and future offences. Implement an actual bail ladder that incorporates a guideline of increasing cash bail rungs. This could be a mandatory minimum ladder or a publicly visible guideline."

Ministry Analysis:

- The rules of bail are set out by the *Criminal Code*. As only Parliament of Canada has the right to make or amend criminal law, Alberta's Crown prosecutors and judiciary must work within this existing legislative framework.
- Bill C-75, amended the *Criminal Code* to make the criminal procedure more modern and efficient. For example, section 493.1 and section 515.2 of the Bill provide further clarity to the "restraint" and "ladder" principles. It clarifies that the officer, justice, or judge shall give "primary

consideration to the release of the accused at the “earliest reasonable opportunity” and “on the least onerous conditions” appropriate in the circumstances, and require that conditions imposed must be “reasonably practicable for the accused to comply with.”

- Ultimately, the denial or granting of bail is a judicial decision. Judicial independence is a cornerstone of our justice system.
- It guarantees that judges make impartial decisions, free of government control or influence and based solely on the facts of a case and the law.

Final Recommendation to the Minister of Justice – Bail Ladder:

The Rural Crime Committee recommends that the Minister of Justice lobby the Federal Minister of Justice to amend the Bail Ladder system such that if the accused has not lived up to the conditions of a no cash bail from a previous charge or offence then the judge must now move forward with a cash bail alternative for this and future offences. Implement an actual bail ladder that incorporates a guideline of increasing cash bail rungs. This could be a mandatory minimum ladder or a publicly visible guideline.

4. Cross Jurisdictional Analysis:

Original Rural Crime Committee Recommendation #4: Cross Jurisdictional Analysis

“The Ministry of Justice needs to do a cross jurisdictional analysis of other provinces to see how they are handling some of the issues: Bail Packages, Bail Crown Offices, Bail Ladder and any other issue that may be impacting the increase in catch and release of the criminal element.”

Ministry Analysis:

- Concerns from citizens regarding the bail process is not an issue unique to Alberta. For example, the city council of North Bay have recently raised concerns to the federal and provincial governments regarding the “catch and release” justice system in Ontario.
- While citizens have raised concerns about the release of accused persons on bail, it is important to understand that the rules of bail are set out by the *Criminal Code*. As only the federal government has the right to make or amend criminal law, Canadian jurisdictions, including Alberta, must work within the existing legislative framework.
- Despite a perception that remand is used sparingly, since 2004/2005, the average number of adults in the remand population (awaiting trial or sentencing) in provincial/territorial correctional services has been greater

than the adult sentenced custody population (Statistics Canada – Adult and youth correctional statistics in Canada 2018/19).

- Among 10 of the 13 provinces and territories in 2018/2019, the adult remand population accounted for more than half of all adults in custody, the remainder of incarcerated individuals having been convicted and sentenced. Alberta's remand population account for (71per cent) of those adults in custody was only surpassed by Ontario at 72per cent (Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Adult Corrections Key Indicator Report).
- Data from Statistics Canada show that between 2014/15 and 2018/19 (most current national data available) Alberta has consistently been one of the provinces with the highest proportion of adult remand population versus sentenced custody population. (Statistics Canada. Table 35-10-0154-01 Average counts of adults in provincial and territorial correctional programs).

Final Recommendation to the Minister of Justice – Cross Jurisdictional Analysis

The Ministry of Justice do a cross jurisdictional analysis of other provinces to see how they are handling some of the issues: Bail Packages, Bail Crown Offices, Bail Ladder and any other issue that may be impacting the increase in catch and release of the criminal element with the goal of making recommendations to the Minister of Just on ways to stop the catch and release scenario that is prevalent in Alberta.

5. Bail Sub-Committee:

Original Rural Crime Committee Recommendation #5: Bail Sub-Committee

“Sponsor the creation of a Bail Sub-Committee made up of stakeholders like: Justices, Crown Prosecutors, Bail Crown Officers, Police/Sheriffs, Citizens etc. to study how to amend the bail process to address the problem of a judicial system that has become a revolving door.”

Ministry Analysis:

- From its implementation, the Crown Bail Office has worked with partners in policing and other justice partners including the hearing office, JP's, legal aid and defence to ensure that appropriate factors are considered by JPs at these hearings.

Final Recommendation to the Minister of Justice – Bail Sub-Committee

It is the Rural Crime Committees recommendation that a Bail Sub-Committee be created that would include the stakeholders from the Ministry Analysis and the Rural Crime Committee that would review the Cross Jurisdictional Analysis and any recommendations from the Ministry of Justice and the conversations with the Federal Government. This committee would also meet several times a year to, canvass stakeholders and Albertans on ideas for improving the justice system. These ideas would be reviewed by the committee and after analyzing the suggestions the committee would present a yearly report to the Minister making recommendations on how to make the justice system work in an efficient fashion and address the problem of a judicial system that has become a revolving door.

Resolution 12-23S

Casino Opportunities for Charitable Organizations

Northern Sunrise County

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Treasury Board and Finance

WHEREAS there is a great need for charitable organizations in Alberta to raise funds to maintain and expand their operations for the good of all Albertans; and

WHEREAS there is a large disparity between the frequency and quality of funding opportunities available to rural charitable organizations compared with charitable organizations in major urban communities; and

WHEREAS the challenges of rural charitable organizations regarding access to casinos and the distribution of proceeds from casinos have been under formal review since at least 2009 with limited progress; and

WHEREAS in 2017, the membership of **Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA)** approved a resolution directing RMA to establish an advisory committee to provide recommendations for reforming Alberta's charitable gaming model so that funding is more equitably distributed among rural and urban charitable organizations; and

WHEREAS in 2019, the RMA advisory committee submitted their report and recommendations, which were endorsed by the RMA Board of Directors, to the Government of Alberta; and

WHEREAS in 2019, the Government of Alberta undertook a new round of engagement on the charitable gaming model; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has still not released any recommendations for changes to the model based on the engagement process or on the input provided by the RMA;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta and Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis to reform Alberta's charitable gaming model to provide equity to all charitable organizations in Alberta, by addressing the disparity between the funding provided, and the frequency of casino opportunities available to charitable organizations in major urban centers compared with those in rural communities.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

Alberta's nineteen casinos are divided into ten regions for the purposes of charitable gaming. Organizations across the province are assigned to a casino in closest proximity to their location. Because charitable organizations are not distributed equally across the province, some regions host many more charitable organizations than others. For charitable organizations, this results in unequal wait times between casino events among charitable organizations in different regions. As charitable organizations only receive revenue when they "work" a casino, an inequity exists related to how often charitable organizations in various areas of the province have this revenue-generating opportunity.

The following table outlines the wait times and revenues each casino region received in 2019.

Casino Region	2019 Wait Time for Key Events (Months)	2019 Annualized Return (product of wait times and proceeds)
Calgary	20	\$42,000
Calgary-Rural	36	\$16,000
Camrose	41	\$6,100
Edmonton	23	\$39,000
Fort McMurray	17	\$32,000
Grande Prairie	31	\$14,100
Lethbridge	33	\$12,000
Medicine Hat	19	\$10,000
Red Deer	36	\$8,500
St. Albert	31	\$8,100

While waiting period is a critical aspect of equitability in the casino gaming system, it tells only half the story. The per-event revenue generated varies widely among regions as well. Some casinos are more popular than others, and this is reflected in how much money is raised at casino events in various regions. Casinos within Edmonton and Calgary generate significantly more revenue on a per event basis than those elsewhere in the province.

Both waiting period and per event proceeds tell a partial story of how casino proceeds vary by region. However, to understand the full scope of how regions compare to one another, these measures must be combined. To do this, the AGLC uses “annualized proceeds,” which are a calculation of the estimated proceeds per year that an organization within a region would receive. This measure is effective as it combines the waiting period and the proceeds per event into a single factor. It is important to note that annualized proceeds is a hypothetical measure. It looks at how much money a charity would receive in a single year within their region if proceeds were distributed in this manner. It is important to note that proceeds are not actually distributed in this way. In reality, organizations receive the average per event proceeds from the quarter in which they volunteered at a casino event. Using annualized proceeds, there is a significant gap between the high-revenue Edmonton and Calgary regions, and the other regions in the province.

RMA and other stakeholders have previously proposed changes to the charitable gaming model to lessen the impacts of these regional differences which would result in charitable organizations across

the province receiving a more similar level of financial benefit for the same amount of volunteer work. To this point, the Government of Alberta has not been receptive to making changes to the current boundaries and distribution of revenues across the province. This resolution would direct RMA to continue to advocate for change on this issue.

RMA BACKGROUND

In 2019, RMA released the [final report of its charitable gaming committee](#), which included a series of principles that should guide the development of a more equitable charitable as well as several specific recommendations as to how the model should be reformed. Later in 2019, AGLC conducted a stakeholder review of the model, which included participation by RMA. Unfortunately, the AGLC's ["what we heard"](#) report from the engagement did not indicate serious consideration of any of RMA's recommendations or other potential approaches to create a more equitable model.

Resolution 13-23S

Municipal Access to Open Data

Smoky Lake County

Carried

Advocacy Target: Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction, Alberta Technology and Innovation

WHEREAS municipal decision-making is best aided and informed by access to fulsome data; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities face constraints in accessing expensive data subscriptions such as LiDAR; and

WHEREAS several provincial ministries, including Municipal Affairs, Health, Transportation and Economic Corridors, Environment and Protected Areas, and Forestry, Parks and Tourism, enjoy substantial data capacity and data warehousing; and

WHEREAS provincial ministries have occasionally proven unreasonably data-protectionist; and

WHEREAS entering into data-sharing agreements with individual ministries is cumbersome and time-consuming, as it imposes severely limited scope and terms; and

WHEREAS Albertans should not be required to pay for access to data that they have already paid for through their tax dollars at higher orders of government; and

WHEREAS considerable progress has been made in the last decade by provincial ministries in enhancing Open data; and

WHEREAS unlocking data provides opportunities for crowd-sourced solutions, efficiencies, collaboration, public safety, and economic development;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to continue to prioritize increased access to Open data for municipalities.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

Open data is a practice that makes data freely available, easy to access, and most importantly, simple to reuse. This can help empower stakeholders and citizens to make informed decisions, to build or grow their business, to better understand issues, and to hold government to account.

There are many ways we can expect Open data to be of value, just as there are also many groups and organizations who can benefit from the availability of Open data, including government itself. Smoky Lake County believes that it is imperative that the Government of Alberta continues to endeavor to increase municipal access to Open data. In turn, this would support innovation, research, and informed decision-making, as well as proactive disclosure and increased accountability.

The nature of innovation is that advancements often stem from unlikely places.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 14-23S

Hydrogen Industry Support

Strathcona County

Carried

Advocacy Target: Natural Resources Canada, Alberta Energy

WHEREAS the energy industry is critical to Alberta's, Canada's, and the world's future economic prosperity; and

WHEREAS Alberta, its municipalities, and its citizens are committed to Alberta's economic recovery through economic diversification that will include being a safe and reliable supplier of energy worldwide; and

WHEREAS Alberta, its municipalities, and its citizens are committed to working with energy industry leaders taking action to address the global climate crisis; and

WHEREAS hydrogen is a zero-emission fuel that will further diversify Alberta's energy sector, enhance our economic competitiveness in a changing energy market and be an essential component of the new clean energy system as the world shifts towards its low carbon future; and

WHEREAS Alberta is Canada's largest petrochemical processing area with significant current and future investments in hydrogen production and critical to any federal commitments; and

WHEREAS Alberta and Alberta municipalities have taken tangible steps through investment in hydrogen initiatives to be leaders in this sector; and

WHEREAS Alberta is home to researchers and innovators in industry and within post-secondary institutions;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada to increase their commitment to support and resource current hydrogen initiatives throughout the province so that Alberta and its innovative energy industry partners may become leaders in the developing hydrogen economy.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

On August 23, 2022, the Prime Minister of Canada, following meetings with the Chancellor of Germany, announced the countries signed a joint declaration of intent to establish a Canada-Germany Hydrogen Alliance. The proposed Alliance would help establish a TransAtlantic Canada-Germany supply corridor, with the target of beginning export by 2025. There was little comment, or commitment, on Alberta's role in this important and newly developing hydrogen economy.

It is imperative that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta and the Government of Alberta act immediately and decisively to ensure that Alberta and its established hydrogen initiatives are able to take advantage of this market. Significant advocacy work is needed to ensure that the cross-Canada infrastructure needed to link Alberta resources to this new market opportunity are in place. Canada's commitment cannot be met without Alberta and western Canada's resources.

Stable and reliable energy markets have never been more critical. The vulnerability of the global energy markets has been highlighted since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Alberta must act on its competitive advantage to secure its position in the global hydrogen market. Alberta has the feedstock, supply chains, experience and is laying the foundation to capitalize on both. The development of Alberta's hydrogen industry is actively supported by numerous organizations around the province. At the forefront of energy innovation are Alberta's energy industry leaders.

Some of the lowest cost hydrogen production costs in the world are found in Alberta.

It is time that the advantages of Alberta are capitalized on with all orders of government, and their organizations, post-secondary institutions, and industry to ensure the opportunity of this generation, to be the world's safe, most efficient and effective supplier of hydrogen, is not lost.

With the abundance of work being done in hydrogen development sphere, the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada must facilitate the partnerships and communication that is needed to realize the potential of hydrogen and position this province to diversify the energy sector immediately for the short, medium and long-term prosperity of this province.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 15-23S

Capital Funding Support for Housing Management Bodies

Birch Hills County

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Affordability and Utilities, Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services

WHEREAS **housing management bodies** (HMBs) that provide supportive living facilities for seniors (lodges) are facing continual unanticipated increasing cost pressures including inflation, higher utility costs and interest rate increases; and

WHEREAS these increasing cost pressures are impacting HMB operations, resulting in deficits that require higher requisition requests as they try to balance capital repairs and operating expenses; and

WHEREAS the overall outcome of the increased cost pressures is reduced affordability for residents; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has announced the Affordability Action Plan designed to provide assistance to seniors facing affordability crises; and

WHEREAS there is no assistance available for supplies or capacity needed for capital maintenance of the actual lodges which are also negatively affected by the increased costs crisis; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has previously provided selected organizations with capital maintenance level funding, however, this is no longer available to HMBs; and

WHEREAS HMBs are in immediate and long-term need of this support to sustain and improve Alberta's seniors' facilities;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to increase funding to housing management bodies to alleviate the affordability crisis and provide funding for capital upkeep or replacement needed to sustain supportive living at senior lodges.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

A recent presentation by the Grande Spirit Foundation Housing Management Body (HMB) highlighted the fact that all capital replacement funding is becoming the sole responsibility of the organization as lodges are not eligible for additional funding from provincial grants. HMBs can typically access support from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for new facilities and capital maintenance via borrowing along with some provincial funding to complete new projects, but not for existing facilities. HMBs throughout the province submit annual business plans to the Government of Alberta with capital renewal requests for existing and new facilities. These requests were funded through grants in the past, which assisted HMBs to prioritize and upgrade capital repairs as required. This grant funding for capital repairs either no longer exists or insufficient to support aging lodge infrastructure. The result is the HMB either continues to raise rental rates to the maximum of residents' income as per the Social Housing Regulation and further challenges affordability for residents, or increases municipal requisitions which adds to the existing tax burden for municipal ratepayers. The Grande Spirit Foundation currently has over 1100 units with 1700 residents, and has approximately \$90 million in capital budgets in planning to assist people in need of housing accommodation.

RMA BACKGROUND

12-22F: Grants-in-Lieu of Taxes for Public Housing Management Authorities

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to increase funding towards the Rent Assistance Benefit program; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA advocate to the Government of Alberta to reinstate grants in-lieu-of taxes for housing units operated by public housing management bodies; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate to the Government of Alberta to revise the *Alberta Housing Act* by replacing “may” with “shall” in section 27(1) and by deleting section 27(2).

[Click here](#) to view the full resolution.

5-21F: Seniors’ Foundation Requisitions

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

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

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

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

[Click here](#) to view the full resolution.

Resolution 16-23S

Applied Research Associations Funding

Northern Sunrise County

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Advanced Education, Alberta Technology and Innovation, Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta outsourced agriculture research and extension services within the province; and

WHEREAS as a result of this outsourcing, applied research associations have taken on a larger role without sources of funding to sustain these operations; and

WHEREAS applied research associations have been historically funded by the Government of Alberta and changes in their funding structure threatens the longevity of their operations; and

WHEREAS the current proposed funding from the organization Results Driven Agriculture Research is project based and does not adequately meet the needs for regional extension and knowledge transfer; and

WHEREAS local research and knowledge transfer funding is not dependable as it is not provided long-term; and

WHEREAS the services provided by applied research associations are especially important when considering the increasing social and political pressure for innovation to improve the sustainability of Canadian agriculture; and

WHEREAS applied research associations are an integral source of unbiased regional research and extension services pertinent to local producers and agricultural service boards;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta provide sustainable operational funding to applied research associations to maintain local, unbiased research and extension services that keep Alberta's agriculture industry innovative and competitive.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

There are 12 applied research associations (ARA) groups across the province that conduct applied research and extension services that are key in developing Alberta agriculture. The ARAs are driven by a desire to empower agricultural innovation by openly sharing ideas supported by sound science and practical wisdom. These associations directly serve the research and outreach needs within their regions, which is essential in helping producers access relevant agricultural research solutions to become more competitive globally. With this expertise, these associations are also pivotal responders to agricultural disasters and are champions of innovative and useful adaptations. They are able to connect stakeholders at a regional, provincial, and national level to collaborate and learn through unbiased applied research.

The areas of expertise of the ARAs range throughout the agriculture industry – some associations focus on the crop sector, while others focus on the forage and livestock sectors, and some cover the entire

spectrum. Each association has a focus dictated by the needs of the regional agricultural producers and local resources available.

Many individuals are employed by ARAs, including 41 full-time employees (nine PhDs, 12 professional Agrologists, 11 Masters researchers, five Certified Crop Advisors, two Agrologists in Training, and two Agrology Technologists in Training) and 28 seasonal summer students. ARAs also own, rent, or lease over 1600 acres of land for agricultural innovation research throughout the province.

CURRENT CHALLENGES FOR ARAs

In 2020 the Government of Alberta reduced spending and activity on agriculture research and extension to facilitate producer and industry-led research. This means that ARAs have increased their research and extension efforts to compensate for the gaps created by the government's reduced role in this sector. Yet, since 2000, annual government funding for the ARAs remained stagnant at \$2 million - \$2.5 million annually, first from the Agriculture Opportunities Fund (AOF), and then from the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) program. The failure to compensate the ARAs for their increased research and extension work puts these groups at serious risk of failure. Private funding and grants to cover operational costs for these faculties are extremely difficult to find. The ARAs have found ways to persevere by accessing alternative revenue sources, donations, and fundraising, however, with increased competition for dollars and less funds to go around, this is no longer sustainable. Many ARAs operate with outdated, unreliable equipment in constant need of repair. One ARA must find alternative work arrangements when it rains due to holes in the office roof.

In 2021, 33% of the ARAs ran at a deficit and another 25% ran at slightly better than break even. Some of the ARAs have managed to leverage revenue with contributions from external resources, however this is dependent on the prosperity of their regions and sectors. The struggles of some ARAs to build capital directly threatens the longevity of these operations. If these research organizations are lost to bankruptcy, it may be directly reflected through the loss of innovation and therefore competitiveness in the region of the lost ARA. Additionally, the public good of the ARAs through extension events provides immeasurable value in terms of public trust in agriculture which positively impacts producer economics, and producer uptake of technologies to improve innovation and reduce environmental impact. The loss of groups like ARAs would be detrimental to the Alberta agriculture industry.

PROVINCIAL FUNDING INITIATIVES

The CAP program is a five-year, \$3 billion federal-provincial-territorial investment in the agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector that began in April 2018. In Alberta, the CAP program is a federal-provincial investment of \$406 million in strategic programs and initiatives for the agricultural sector. Alberta's ARAs have received some operational funding through this program for the past four years, as a replacement to the previous Agriculture Opportunities Fund (AOF; dating back to 2000) however, as stated earlier, these funds are insufficient for these organizations.

Currently an arms-length organization called RDAR (Results Driven Agriculture Research) allocates funding from the Government of Alberta to research projects, with the aim of allowing farmers to collaborate with others involved in research to determine research priorities. This organization was established following the Government of Alberta's step back from direct research and extension work in 2020. RDAR replaces previous research models including the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency (ALMA) and the Alberta Crop Industry Development Fund (ACIDF). A portion of the funding for RDAR comes from the Canadian Agricultural Partnership and federal-provincial investment.

RDAR is heavily focused on research projects, and the demand for their research funds is extremely high – they do not have adequate funds to cover all phases of the innovation cycle across all sectors and regions. Program or operational funding is also challenging to fit within RDAR’s purpose. Additionally, ARAs deliver other outcomes (such as rural economic development, and rural mental health services) that align with the priorities of Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation, but not RDAR’s.

ARAs have received some project funding through RDAR, however, this funding is for the direct project costs and does not adequately cover the overhead costs, let alone fund the non-research-specific public good projects performed by these research facilities. A more comprehensive and sustainable funding program is needed to preserve these facilities.

NEW FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

The CAP program, that is primarily responsible for the overhead funding of Alberta’s Government of Alberta, is coming to term in March of 2023. However, an additional \$2.5 million has been allocated through RDAR to extend funding to March 2024, but this does not provide long-term security for the ARAs. A new funding system is required after the expiry of the CAP program to ensure that ARAs can remain operational. Alberta needs a program that allows for ARAs to continue to provide services and research that is vital for the competitiveness of the Alberta agriculture industry.

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 17-23S

Negative Impact of Bill C-21 on Albertans

MD of Greenview

Carried

Advocacy Target: Justice Canada

WHEREAS the House of Commons has completed two readings on proposed Bill C-21: *An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)*; and

WHEREAS the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security is currently reviewing and proposing amendments to Bill C-21; and

WHEREAS the current process for firearm control and licensing requires completion of a firearms safety course, a provincial license, and background checks, is sufficient for managing and regulating firearms; and

WHEREAS Bill C-21 will amend the current licensing process by not allowing a registration certificate for a handgun to be issued to an individual; and

WHEREAS the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security proposes to amend Bill C-21 by banning certain additional firearms and ammunition; and

WHEREAS this amendment will adversely affect the quality of life of rural residents by limiting their access to firearms for hunting and recreational shooting activities ; and

WHEREAS Bill C-21 would require enhanced background checks for all gun owners, which could create additional hurdles for rural residents who may not have access to reliable internet or other forms of communication needed to complete these checks; and

WHEREAS Bill C-21 could limit access to firearms for recreational and subsistence hunting in rural areas, leading to reduced income for those who rely on hunting as a source of food or income; and

WHEREAS this amendment will make it more difficult for rural residents to participate in hunting and recreational shooting activities, which are important cultural and recreational activities in many rural communities; and

WHEREAS this amendment will place additional financial burdens on rural residents who must now travel further and/or incur additional expenses to purchase firearms;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Canada to not proceed with any amendment to the *Firearms Act* that will unfairly restrict access to recreational or hunting opportunities for rural Albertans; and

FURTHER IT BE RESOLVED that the RMA advocate to the Government of Canada to review the classification of what constitutes a “prohibited firearm” to ensure that it balances safety with the access to firearms for rural residents to enjoy recreational activities.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

Canadian gun legislation is frequently amended. In 2012 Bill C-19: *Ending the Long-gun Registry Act* came into force. This Act removed the requirements to register non-restricted firearms and destroyed existing registration records. In 2015 Bill C-42: *Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act* received Royal Assent. This Act requires a firearms safety course for all first-time licence applicants and provides stronger Criminal Code provisions relating to prohibiting the possession of firearms when someone is convicted of an offence involving domestic violence. As well, it granted authority to the Governor in Council to deem firearms to be non-restricted or restricted. In 2019 Bill C-71: *An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms* received Royal Assent. Bill C-71 strengthened the federal firearms regulatory regime, and law enforcement was provided tools to better solve firearms-related crimes. In 2020 the Government of Canada prohibited over 1,500 models of what the government claims to be assault-style firearms and imposed a new maximum threshold for guns with a muzzle energy greater than 10,000 Joules and with a bore diameter 20mm or greater. On May 18, 2022, additional regulations for licence verification and business record-keeping for non-restricted firearms came into force.

Bill C-21: *An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)* is a House Government Bill, sponsored by the Minister of Public Safety and given first reading on May 30, 2022. The original iteration of the Bill made handguns illegal, save for exemptions that include individuals who hold an authorization to carry handguns and those who compete or coach in a handgun shooting discipline on the Olympic level. The amendments discussed in Amendment G-46 by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security go beyond the scope of the Bill and attempt to introduce legislation that will effectively make it illegal to use firearms for hunting.

Residents of the Province of Alberta, and particularly those who reside in rural areas, are disproportionately opposed to laws that limit the ability of individuals to hunt recreationally and for their livelihood. The Government of Canada aims to interfere with firearm collecting, airsoft sports, target shooting and hunting, all of which are pastimes that enrich the lives of rural Albertans. The proposed amendments to Bill C-21 places the onus of gun violence in Canada on highly trained, responsible and lawful gun owners when the Government of Canada needs to invest in a comprehensive strategy to address criminal behaviours resulting from a lack of mental health and socioeconomic support. A 2021 firearms and violent crime in Canada report by Statistics Canada claimed that “physical assault, robbery, and the firearm-specific Criminal Code violations of discharging a firearm with intent, pointing a firearm, or using a firearm in the commission of an offence accounted for 80% of all firearm-related violent crime in 2021”. Meaning that, the unlawful use of firearms commonly accompanies other illegal acts. This data reinforces the point that this Bill should be addressing those that use firearms to enact violent crimes, rather than impacting the lawful acts of hunting and sport shooting.

RMA does not currently have any advocacy efforts for the opposition of Bill C-21. The association has previously endorsed resolution 12-01S “Firearm Restrictions” in 2001, as well as resolutions 6-02S “Firearms” and 23-02F “Right to Own and Use Firearms” in 2002. All three oppose additional restriction of firearms through legislation implemented by the Government of Canada

RMA BACKGROUND

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 19-23S

Non-Profit Exemption from Federal Fuel Charge

MD of Smoky River

Carried

Advocacy Target: Finance Canada

WHEREAS the lingering effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, declining community participation and contracted consumer spending has left many non-profit organizations unable to meet their operational expenses; and

WHEREAS in 2019, Finance Canada announced its intent to apply the federal pollution pricing fuel charge in Alberta, effective January 1, 2020, as a result of the province's May 30, 2019 repeal of its carbon levy; and

WHEREAS Finance Canada stated that “the direct proceeds from the federal fuel charge ... will go directly to individuals and families in Alberta through tax-free Climate Action Incentive payments.” *And that*, “the remainder will go to support other sectors, including small and medium-sized businesses, schools, hospitals, nonprofits and Indigenous communities in the province”; and

WHEREAS the background document, *Proposed Application of the Federal Carbon Pollution Pricing System in Alberta*, estimated that \$610 million would go to support Alberta’s schools, hospitals, **small and medium-sized businesses** (SMEs), colleges and universities, municipalities, non-profits, and Indigenous communities over four fiscal years from 2019-20 to 2022-23; and

WHEREAS in 2020, Finance Canada stated that 10% of the direct proceeds from the federal fuel charge would be used to support small businesses, schools, universities, municipalities, and Indigenous groups; and

WHEREAS the 2022 federal budget allocates proceeds from the federal pollution pricing fuel charge to Indigenous groups, farmers and emission-intensive trade-exposed businesses, but no longer addresses support for Alberta’s schools, hospitals, colleges and universities, municipalities and non-profit organizations; and

WHEREAS the **Low Carbon Economy Fund** (LCEF), which has earmarked \$2.2 billion over seven years, is only available for projects that result in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and do not provide support for non-profit operational expenses; and

WHEREAS the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* currently allows for certain groups to benefit from partial or full relief of the fuel charge through the use of an exemption certificate;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Canada to amend the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* to allow registered non-profit organizations to apply for an exemption certificate from the federal fuel charge; and

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA advocate for the Government of Canada to meet their previous mandate of support for registered non-profit organizations by allowing them to access a portion of the direct proceeds from the federal fuel charge to fund their increasing operating expenses.

MEMBER BACKGROUND

Since the implementation of the *Carbon Tax Repeal Act* in 2019, the Government of Canada has signaled its intent to use the direct proceeds from the federal fuel charge, not issued to individuals and families through the Climate Action Incentive Payment (CAIP), to support small and medium-sized businesses, schools, hospitals, non-profits and Indigenous communities.

While the 2022 federal budget has reiterated support to indigenous groups, farmers and emission-intensive trade-exposed businesses, it does not provide direct support for non-profits groups, as promised in numerous background documents. Although the Government of Canada has earmarked \$2.2 billion for the Low Carbon Economy Fund (LCEF), the LCEF only provides support for large projects that can demonstrate a reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions over a seven (7) year timeline. This does not help non-profit organizations which are struggling to remain operational as a result of rising utility costs onset, in part, by the federal fuel charge.

The following table shows the estimated increases in the federal fuel charge over the next seven (7) years and the estimated effect on the price of natural gas:

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Est. Fuel Charge Rates (per Tonne)	\$65	\$80	\$95	\$110	\$125	\$140	\$155	\$170
Est. Effect on Natural Gas Rates (per GJ)	\$3.42	\$4.21	\$4.99	\$5.78	\$6.57	\$7.36	\$8.15	\$8.94

RMA BACKGROUND

16-22F: Exemption of Natural Gas and Propane for Agriculture Under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Canada to amend the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* to include natural gas and propane as exempted fuels for agricultural production.

[Click here](#) to view the full resolution.

2-22S: Negative Impact of Carbon Tax on Rural Albertans

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.

[Click here](#) to view the full resolution.