



RMA
RURAL MUNICIPALITIES
of ALBERTA

2023 Resolution Status Update

Volume 1

May 2023



2023 Resolution Status Update - Volume 1

Published by the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA)
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Introduction

The Resolution Status Update is divided into three sections.

- ◆ **Section 1** provides detailed information on the government response to the fall 2022 resolutions and includes the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) Board of Directors’ reaction to the response as well as anticipated follow up.
- ◆ **Section 2** updates members by reporting on all active resolutions, grouped by advocacy area.

Definition of Terms

Following endorsement by RMA members, resolutions are sent to the appropriate level of government for response. Once a response is received, RMA labels the resolution with one of five indicators which determines the status of that resolution. The intention of providing a status for each resolution is to evaluate whether the government response meets the intent of the resolution. The status is not intended to reflect RMA’s advocacy efforts on a resolution.

Below are the descriptions of all resolution ranking statuses.

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

Section 1: Government Responses to Fall 2022 Resolutions

RMA recently received responses to the resolutions adopted at the fall 2022 convention from the Government of Alberta and Government of Canada. The following table provides an overview of the initial assessment to resolutions following the response. **RMA emphasizes that this table only reflects the initial response received from the Government of Alberta and Government of Canada and that advocacy efforts on all resolutions are in progress.**

Reactions at a Glance

#	RESOLUTION NAME	STATUS
1-22F	Volunteer Firefighters as Medical First Responders	Intent Not Met
2-22F	Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists Training for Rural Healthcare	Intent Not Met
3-22F	Provide for a Uniform Method of Auditing and Enforcing Compliance with Community Aggregate Payment Levy Bylaws	Intent Not Met
4-22F	Well Drilling Equipment Tax Regulation	Intent Not Met
5-22F	Fertilizer Emission Reduction Target Impacts	Intent Not Met
6-22F	Financial Burden of Emergency Service Response on Crown Lands	Intent Not Met
7-22F	Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Reform	Intent Not Met
8-22F	Rural Mental Health Advocacy	Intent Not Met
9-22F	Renewable Energy Project Reclamation Requirements	Intent Not Met
10-22F	Sustainability of Small Rural Schools	Intent Not Met
11-22F	Disparity in Electricity Distribution and Transmission Rates	Intent Not Met
12-22F	Restore Grants-in-Lieu of Taxes for Public Housing Management Authorities	Accepted in Part
13-22F	Enhanced Wetland Replacement Program	Intent Not Met
14-22F	Third Party Inspections for Gravel Pit Reclamation	Intent Not Met
16-22F	Exemption of Natural Gas and Propane for Agriculture Under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act	Incomplete Information
17-22F	Government Funding For Nurse Practitioners	Intent Not Met
18-22F	Regulations for Motorists Passing School Buses with Amber Lights Flashing	Intent Not Met
19-22F	Portion of Funding from Public Lands Camping Pass Directed to Municipalities	Intent Not Met
20-22F	Lost Road Closure Files	Accepted in Part

21-22F	Loss of Agricultural Land to Renewable Energy Projects	Intent Not Met
23-22F	Small Scale Generation Regulation – Interconnection Challenges	Intent Not Met
24-22F	Improved Crop Insurance for Market Gardens	Accepted in Principle

Resolution 1-22F

Volunteer Firefighters as Medical First Responders

Ponoka County

Carried

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

WHEREAS public health is a provincial responsibility, and **emergency medical services** (EMS) and ambulance response are the authority of **Alberta Health Services** (AHS) and its contractors; and

WHEREAS AHS centralized and assumed responsibility for EMS from municipalities and at that time promised no degradation of EMS services in rural communities; and

WHEREAS many municipalities operate a fire service utilizing volunteer firefighters or paid on-call firefighters who participate in the Medical First Response program but are not trained paramedics; and

WHEREAS these volunteers often serve as first responders in the absence or delay of Emergency Medical Technicians and paramedics within their service area; and

WHEREAS AHS has, through its ambulance and paramedic processes and policies, significantly reduced the services provided to rural Alberta; and

WHEREAS as a result, ambulance personnel are not always available to attend as first responders thereby leaving that responsibility to the volunteer firefighters; and

WHEREAS many volunteer firefighters are experiencing an increasing level of stress or burnout and reduced capacity to respond because of these additional duties; and

WHEREAS many jurisdictions, due to unbudgeted rising costs, may need to contemplate reducing service levels to no longer respond to medical assist calls, even though it places its own residents in further jeopardy;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to compensate municipalities that operate a fire service with volunteers or employees that are qualified as Medical First Responders in instances when those volunteers or employees respond to emergencies due to the absence or delay of provincial emergency medical technicians and paramedics in their service area.

Government Response

Alberta Health

As background, in Alberta, the EMT designation is no longer used by the Alberta College of Paramedics or in provincial legislation. The EMT designation has been replaced by the primary care paramedic (PCP) designation. The other two designations for regulated members of the Alberta College of Paramedics are emergency medical responder (EMR) and advanced care paramedic (ACP), with EMR as the entry-level qualification, PCP as the middle qualification, and ACP as the highest qualification.

Alberta's government understands that the ongoing strain on emergency medical services (EMS) has had a major impact on medical first responders, and we sincerely value the partnership we have with municipalities that provide this important service.

Under the Alberta Medical First Response (MFR) Program, administered by Alberta Health Services (AHS), MFR agencies made up of municipal fire-rescue services may join AHS' MFR Program and respond to requests from

AHS EMS dispatch to provide MFR services prior to the arrival of EMS. This voluntary agreement also allows MFR agencies to choose which types of EMS events they wish to respond to.

As MFR services are an optional responsibility for Alberta municipalities that are part of a public safety role, Alberta Health does not provide direct funding to MFR agencies to cover operational costs. However, the department does cover the cost of some training, equipment and supports, including the development and administration of provincial medical control protocols for medical first responders.

As you are aware due to your involvement with the Alberta EMS Provincial Advisory Committee (AEPAC), I was provided with a number of recommendations regarding the important role of medical first responders in assisting EMS to provide emergency health care to Albertans. These recommendations also speak to supports, including funding.

In his role as Parliamentary Secretary for EMS Reform, R.J. Sigurdson, MLA, Highwood, and former AEPAC co-chair, will be leading efforts to develop an implementation plan for AEPAC's recommendations, while keeping a strong focus on Premier Smith's direction to reduce EMS response times and wait times for EMS crews in hospital emergency departments. Both are significant factors in increased time on task and ongoing pressures on medical first responders in Alberta.

It is important to note that the implementation of initial recommendations from AEPAC included pilot projects involving MFR agencies and an exemption permitting EMRs to work on emergency ambulances. Budget 2022 includes \$64 million in funding for EMS. This is in addition to \$600 million that was added to Alberta Health's operating expenses budget in 2022/2023, growing to \$1.8 billion by 2024/2025.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response does not acknowledge the increased need to fund MFR agencies, specifically in rural areas. While participation in the Alberta Medical First Responder Program may provide funding to municipalities for some training and related costs, this resolution is seeking funding support for situations in which rural municipal first responders are required to provide services beyond their formal scope due to a lack of provincial EMS resources in the area. Currently, the province is essentially downloading the responsibility of responding to some emergencies and accidents onto rural municipal first responders. This not only carries increased costs for municipalities, but also places municipal first responders, many of whom are volunteers, into front line response roles that they may not be comfortable with taking on.

In 2022, the Government of Alberta accepted the final report of the Alberta EMS Provincial Advisory Committee (AEPAC). Among the 53 recommendations in the report were several related to broadening and standardizing the role of MFRs in responding to emergencies. While this approach has merit, there is a concerning lack of detail as to if or how municipalities will be supported to upgrade their MFR capabilities or for the costs of responding to emergencies.

As the response does not indicate a willingness to compensate municipalities for events when they provide services beyond their scope, RMA assigns this a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 2-22F

Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists Training for Rural Healthcare

Mountain View County

Carried

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

WHEREAS all disciplines of healthcare in Alberta are experiencing shortages of qualified professionals and rural areas are experiencing even greater shortages than urban sites; and

WHEREAS rural healthcare facilities require a wider, multi-discipline skill set known as **Combined Laboratory and X-Ray Technologist (CLXT)** than those that are required in conventional urban settings; and

WHEREAS CLXT skill sets are mandatory for rural healthcare locations, and inadequate numbers of students are being trained at the **Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)** to meet the need in rural Alberta; and

WHEREAS NAIT is the only institution offering this training in Alberta, with a capacity of forty students per year and has indicated that they have the capacity within their infrastructure to increase by an additional twenty students if they have the clinical sites to support student training and/or a viable option of simulation training that will allow for the increase in students; and

WHEREAS NAIT has also advised that they are committed to exploring ways to increase their CLXT intake; and

WHEREAS the Alberta 2030 vision is focused on the post-secondary system and being highly responsive to labour market needs;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to immediately expand the number of seats available to train Combined Laboratory and X-Ray Technologist (CLXT) for rural Alberta by increasing the number of seats for CLXT training at NAIT by twenty seats and explore means by which an additional twenty seat capacity can be created at NAIT or another Alberta Institution.

Government Response

Alberta Advanced Education

Thank you for your letter regarding RMA Resolution 2-22-F, Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists Training for Rural Healthcare. I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

The challenges facing our healthcare system mean Albertans are not getting the necessary care they need when and where they need it. In Budget 2022, we announced the Alberta at Work initiative to help individuals develop new skills, attract talent to the province, and encourage all Albertans to participate in the labour market.

Advanced Education plays a key role in Alberta at Work, especially through the Targeted Enrolment Expansion program which invests in new seats in high-demand program areas like the one mentioned in Resolution 2-22-F. I am pleased to report that the province has funded the expansion of healthcare professional programs by almost 2,300 seats in this and future years. This expansion includes creating new seats in critically understaffed healthcare professions, such as nurses, medical laboratory professionals, paramedics, and health care aides.

My mandate letter from Premier Smith directs me to further expand on the Targeted Enrolment Expansion program to increase spaces in high demand programs in economic and medical fields of study.

Advanced Education has yet to receive a proposal involving the expansion of the existing program or the creation of new programs related to Combined Laboratory and X-Ray Technologist programs. My department would be happy to review any such proposal and will indicate to Alberta's post-secondary institutions that further proposals related to the expansion of programs in the medical field are encouraged.

Alberta Health Services

Thank you for your letter of November 29, 2022 outlining some of the recent Resolutions from the RMA's Fall Session.

I appreciate you sharing the concerns that many of your members have regarding the provision of health services. Alberta Health Services strives to ensure that all Albertans have access to high quality health care in a timely fashion.

The Resolutions in question however fall more within the realm of government policy direction in Health and Advanced Education. I understand that these resolutions have also been provided to the Government of Alberta and I anticipate that they will respond to you directly.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA is pleased to hear that additional funding has been allocated to the programs such as nurses and laboratory professionals. However RMA would like more information on how these seats are being allocated to each program and to what extent they are expanding these for rural Alberta.

Further, Alberta Advanced Education's responses indicates that they have not yet received a proposal for the Combined Laboratory and X-Ray Technologist programs. RMA would like to see Alberta Advanced Education collaborate with NAIT and other relevant expert stakeholders on how to expand this.

As a result, RMA assigns this a status **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 3-22F

Provide for a Uniform Method of Auditing and Enforcing Compliance with Community Aggregate Payment Levy Bylaws

Stettler County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs**

WHEREAS many rural municipalities have enacted a **Community Aggregate Payment Levy (CAPL)** bylaw to provide for the collection of revenues on the basis of aggregate removed from lands within the municipality; and

WHEREAS the CAPL quantities are self-reported by aggregate producers; and

WHEREAS the CAPL Regulation does not provide a framework or mechanism to audit reported shipments; and

WHEREAS municipalities are required to implement their own auditing process which may differ greatly between jurisdictions, resulting in confusion for aggregate producers;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta for a change to the Community Aggregate Payment Levy (CAPL) Regulation to explicitly define a mechanism or framework for how municipalities should audit CAPL shipment reports and define standardized penalties when aggregate producers fail to meet their obligations under the CAPL Regulation and related municipal bylaws;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA advocate to the Government of Alberta to consider noncompliance with CAPL bylaws when contemplating company applications, renewals, and reporting for Class 1 gravel pits.

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

The Community Aggregate Payment Levy Regulation was recently extended for two years. This provides time to the Rural Municipalities of Alberta and the Alberta Sand and Gravel Association to consult with their members, develop recommendations in an established timeframe, and ensure the two associations and their members mutually support changes to the regulation.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA appreciates that the Community Aggregate Payment Levy Regulation has been extended until the end of 2024. While this would prevent the change proposed in the resolution from being formally implemented until the Regulation is next updated, the second request in the resolution, for the Government of Alberta to consider non-compliance with CAPL bylaws when reviewing applications related to Class 1 gravel pits, falls within provincial jurisdiction and action could be taken on this issue immediately.

As a result, RMA assigns this resolution a status of Intent Not Met and will continue to advocate for greater accountability or the gravel industry related to abiding by community aggregate payment levies.

Resolution 4-22F

Well Drilling Equipment Tax Regulation

Athabasca County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs**

WHEREAS municipalities benefit from long-term and stable financial commitments from the Government of Alberta; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities have recently experienced reductions in revenue and financial support from the Government of Alberta, including changes to or eliminations of linear assessment, **well drilling equipment tax** (WDET), grants in place of taxes, and reductions to program funding; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities have recently absorbed increased expenditures due to the downloading of provincial costs; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities have forgone considerable revenues from the WDET and non-payment of taxes by the energy sector, while shouldering increasing costs attributed to infrastructure strain and the administrative burden resulting from increased exploration and development activities; and

WHEREAS the global markets for oil and gas have improved significantly since the Government of Alberta introduced measures to increase oil and gas investment in the province, including the elimination of the WDET and a three-year property tax holiday on newly drilled wells; and

WHEREAS implementation of the WDET does not increase the financial burden on the Government of Alberta, but signals the importance of strong reciprocal relationships between municipalities and industry partners;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta reintroduce a Well Drilling Equipment Tax Regulation or otherwise provide funding to restore municipal revenue streams that assist with recovering costs for maintenance of public infrastructure from active industry participants.

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

In October 2020, the government committed to maintaining assessment models for wells, pipelines, and wellsite machinery and equipment for three years. Instead of substantial changes, the government implemented several property assessment and taxation incentives, including eliminating the Well Drilling Equipment Tax. These measures support economic recovery and provide certainty to industry, investors, municipalities, and other property taxpayers.

While the government continues to monitor the impact of this policy and appreciates the concerns regarding the impact this has had on municipal revenues, to date there had not been plans to reinstate the Well Drilling Equipment Tax or to directly compensate municipalities. All Albertans benefit from a strong oil and gas industry that creates jobs and supports economic activity in communities throughout Alberta.

Municipal Affairs, in collaboration with Energy has recently undertaken a detailed survey to collect current, comprehensive information on the state of unpaid property tax by oil and gas companies in Alberta. Municipal Affairs has also established a committee composed of industry and municipal representatives, including the

Rural Municipalities of Alberta, to co-design an engagement process for the broader review and to recommend key principles for Alberta's regulated property assessment system.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response references the elimination of the Well Drilling Equipment Tax (WDET) as a relief measure provided to industry in 2020 as an alternative to significant changes to the regulated assessment model that were then under consideration. While this approach may have had merit during the difficult economic period of 2020, it is currently unnecessary and subsidizing oil and gas companies by removing a revenue source for rural municipalities during a period of record profits for the industry. According to the Alberta Economic Dashboard, wells drilled have increased by 46% in the one-year period between October 2021 and October 2022 (the month in which the most recent data was available). The total number of wells drilled in October 2020 (when the WDET was eliminated) was 202, while 949 wells were drilled in October 2022.

The intent of the WDET is to provide rural municipalities with much-needed revenue to offset increased infrastructure strain associated with the drilling of new wells. In some municipalities, drilling is occurring at an extremely rapid pace. The lack of a WDET, combined with the tax holiday on new wells provided by the province at the same time, as resulted in municipalities having virtually no abilities to raise revenue to offset new costs associated with oil and gas industry growth.

Additionally, the response's reference to efforts to address unpaid taxes by the oil and gas industry is concerning, as the payment of property taxes is a legal obligation of all property owners, including oil and gas companies, and a solution to the issue (which has not been found) should not be framed as an alternative to the return of the WDET, as the two issues are separate. If anything, the fact that municipalities currently struggle to collect property taxes from the industry would suggest that other alternative revenue-generation tools should be used.

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

Resolution 5-22F

Fertilizer Emission Reduction Target Impacts

MD of Taber

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada**

WHEREAS In December 2020, the Government of Canada set a national fertilizer emissions reduction target of 30% by 2030; and

WHEREAS fertilizer is a critical input for crop production, and reducing fertilizer use will impact yields and future yield gains across the country; and

WHEREAS according to a report published by Fertilizer Canada, a 30% rate reduction model is estimated to result in a loss of \$10.4 billion in canola, corn, and spring wheat crop production by 2030; and

WHEREAS significant production loss will have detrimental effects on Canada's ability to fill domestic processing and export capacities which will affect the overall Canadian Agri-food economy; and

WHEREAS the success of the Canadian agriculture sector depends heavily on the ability to export; and, in 2021, Canada exported approximately \$82.2 billion in agriculture and food products; and

WHEREAS Canada is the fifth-largest exporter of Agri-food in the world, exporting to over 200 countries; and

WHEREAS a significant reduction in crop production will have an adverse effect on the global supply of food; and

WHEREAS emission reduction targets should be based on emissions per unit of crop produced to maintain growing agricultural exports, as focusing on absolute emissions from the sector will have severe consequences to the competitiveness of agricultural operators and the fertilizer industry; and

WHEREAS Canadian farmers have been and are currently implementing sustainable practices to mitigate fertilizer emissions; and

WHEREAS through collaboration with specialists/agronomists, crop outputs are maximized using the smallest amount of input, new equipment and technology are invested in to mitigate product waste and scheduling crop rotations appropriately, and biodiversity is utilized to promote soil health and produce livestock feed; and

WHEREAS the implementation of Fertilizer Canada's 4R Nutrient Stewardship has the ability to balance farmer, industry and government goals to improve on-farm economics, crop productivity and fertilizer efficiency, while benefiting the environment by focusing on the 4R principles – "Right Source, Right Time, Right Rate and Right Place;" and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada has indicated that it will collaborate with fertilizer manufacturers, agricultural operators, and provinces/territories to develop an approach that will meet the 30% reduction target, and to date, there has been no announced approach and no known viable alternatives to synthetic fertilizers;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Canada either cancel the 30% fertilizer emissions reduction target or ensure that said target remains voluntary.

Government Response

Not yet received.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA continues to request a response from the Government of Canada regarding this resolution. Although there has been no formal response to RMA from the Government of Canada, a “What We Heard” report on fertilizer emissions reduction target, which outlines the next steps on collaboration within the sector. This feedback will assist in meeting Canada’s fertilizer emissions reduction target from 30% of 2020 levels by 2030. RMA will continue to advocate for the Government of Canada to cancel the 30% emissions reduction target.

As the Government of Canada continues to push for a 30% fertilizer emissions reduction target and has not given a formal response to RMA, RMA assigns this a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 6-22F

Financial Burden of Emergency Service Response on Crown Lands

MD of Bighorn

Carried

- ▶ ***Advocacy Target: Alberta Health, Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism***

WHEREAS many municipalities provide emergency services that respond to motor vehicle collisions, recreational accidents, and medical/traumatic injuries on Crown lands; and

WHEREAS in rural Alberta the vast majority of calls for emergency service are for visitors recreating in the Calgary Forest Area and associated Crown lands; and

WHEREAS emergency service accessing remote areas results in increased apparatus costs, increased repair costs, exposure to dangerous response conditions, and extensive response times leaving rural communities without adequate response protection; and

WHEREAS rural communities bear the financial burden of providing the same level of service to all Albertans within their municipal boundaries;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta develop a fee for service/compensation schedule for emergency services dispatched to respond to calls on Crown land.

Government Response

Alberta Health

This resolution calls on Alberta's government to develop a fee-for-service/compensation schedule for emergency services dispatched to respond to calls on Crown lands.

Similarly to the response to Resolution 1-22F, to exercise their responsibility for public safety, municipalities are eligible to register with AHS' MFR Program on a voluntary basis on behalf of their fire-rescue agencies. Alberta Health does not provide direct funding to cover operational costs incurred by municipal fire-rescue agencies or other rescue groups, including costs incurred on calls on Crown lands. That said, government does cover the cost of some training, equipment, and supports, including the development and administration of provincial medical control protocols for medical first responders.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The response provided mentions that some aspects of MFR is compensated, including training, equipment and supports, however the response does not acknowledge the time taken out of a municipal MFR's shift to respond to emergencies which are not located within a municipality, but still require emergency assistance. Additionally, not all municipalities participate in the MFR program but may still respond to calls on Crown land due to a lack of available provincial response capacity.

As the response does not indicate that any additional compensation will be provided for calls on Crown Land, RMA assigns this a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 7-22F

Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Reform

Brazeau County

Carried as amended

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs**

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has legislated **intermunicipal collaboration frameworks** (ICFs) in part 17.2 of the ***Municipal Government Act*** (MGA); and

WHEREAS ICFs are intended to support collaboration between bordering municipalities to ensure shared planning, delivery, and funding of inter-municipal services; and

WHEREAS municipalities that cannot create an ICF by the required date must refer matters of disagreement to an arbitrator; and

WHEREAS the scope and definition of municipal services are not clearly defined within the MGA leading to significant utilization of arbitrators; and

WHEREAS municipalities that reported difficulties and, in turn, unfair arbitration rulings related to the ICF process attributed unsatisfactory outcomes to the ambiguities associated with the scope of services and quantifying verifiable service costs; and

WHEREAS arbitrators do not have the appropriate data and, in some cases, the appropriate knowledge base regarding municipal governance to make informed decisions concerning ICF rulings; and

WHEREAS arbitration rulings can have unintended, detrimental financial impacts on municipalities hindering their operations and services to ratepayers;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request the Government of Alberta amend the *Municipal Government Act* to define “core municipal services” for the purpose of intermunicipal collaboration frameworks and mandate that municipalities present verifiable costs to justify cost sharing for the aforementioned defined core municipal services;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA request that the Government of Alberta ensure that members of a growth management board are not required to enter into an intermunicipal collaboration framework with each other.

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

The implementation of intermunicipal collaboration framework (ICF) requirements has been broadly successful in the large majority of cases, as evidenced by 99 per cent of municipalities finalizing agreements on ICFs by the legislated deadline.

The *Municipal Government Act* provisions governing ICFs have been designed to streamline the ICF process and increase flexibility and creativity regarding how those services are managed and funded to meet the unique needs of each partnership.

Municipal Affairs intends to review of the ICF legislation, processes, and procedures – with an initial focus on the arbitration process – to identify any potential improvements to legislation and/or practices that may be appropriate. Engagement with municipal stakeholders – including the Rural Municipalities of Alberta and

Alberta Municipalities – will be a key part of this review. The ministry expects the review to take place following completion of the ongoing judicial processes.

Municipal Affairs will continue to track suggestions and feedback.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA members have identified significant gaps in the process that place rural municipalities at risk. While 99% of all ICFs may have been agreed upon without significant disagreement or the need for arbitration, approximately 10% of RMA members were involved in arbitrations. Additionally, according to a 2022 RMA member survey, over 32% of respondents indicated that they considered the service delivery costs they were required to incur due to ICFs as unfair, 31% considered the scope of services included in the ICF as unfair, and 25% agreed to terms that they were not comfortable to avoid the risk of arbitration.

These survey results indicate that although 99% of ICFs may have been routine on paper, in reality there were aspects of the process that led to rural municipalities agreeing to terms they were not necessarily comfortable with to avoid further costs and risks associated with arbitration.

One of the most common issues identified by RMA members is linked to this specific resolution, which is a lack of scope and clarity over what can be defined as a “service” for the purpose of ICF negotiations. RMA strongly believes that properly defining thresholds or indicators for how municipalities (and arbitrators) can define a service would further streamline the process, reduce conflict, and ensure that both parties come to agreement on commonly defined regional services.

In April 2023, the Minister of Municipal Affairs signed Ministerial Order No. MSD:024/23, which extends the mandatory ICF review period from five years to seven years, for one time only. According to a letter from the Minister, “this extension allows time for the legal appeals to be concluded, the ministry to engage with municipalities on potential legislative amendments to the ICF provisions, and municipal partners to work towards renewing their agreements.”

While this extension is a positive step and increases the likelihood that the process can be improved before mandatory renegotiations are required, RMA remains concerned that municipalities may execute early renegotiation clauses within some ICF agreements to attempt to exploit the current flaws in the process outlined in this resolution. Alberta Municipal Affairs has indicated that no review or changes to the ICF process will be considered until the conclusion of ICF legal appeals currently underway. This means that the current terms will remain in place indefinitely, which poses risks to municipalities.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA looks forward to advocating on this issue further when the ICF engagement commence.

Resolution 8-22F

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Health, Alberta Skilled Trades and Professions**

WHEREAS rural Alberta is under-served by mental health professionals, and the need for qualified, comprehensive, and accessible mental health services are desperately needed throughout Alberta; and

WHEREAS despite promises made by successive provincial and federal governments to improve mental health services for all Albertans, rural Alberta continues to be underserved without any substantive change; and

WHEREAS the need for readily available and quality mental health services is growing continuously, as can be seen by growing homeless populations, increasing drug dependency, correlated increases in property crimes, overloaded law enforcement, and judicial systems; and

WHEREAS there is currently no eligibility for the Canada Student Loan forgiveness program for provisional psychologists and psychologists who are members of the Alberta Psychologist Association; and

WHEREAS currently professional counsellors registered with the Canadian Counselling & Psychotherapy Association with practices located in rural Alberta do not qualify for the Canada Student Loan forgiveness program; and

WHEREAS currently in Alberta there are no minimum standards or governing body for practicing counsellors; and

WHEREAS the Association of Counselling Therapy of Alberta has been petitioning the Government of Alberta to regulate professional counsellors practicing in Alberta by establishing a College of Counselling Therapy of Alberta; and

WHEREAS regulating counsellors holds them to professional standards and subjects them to a disciplinary process should these standards be breached, thereby ensuring vulnerable Albertans are not exposed to potentially harmful or poor-quality services; and

WHEREAS due to the lack of a regulating body, qualified professional counsellors are often not recognized by employee assistance programs for reimbursement; and

WHEREAS many rural Albertans are required to travel long distances and pay out of pocket for counselling services, making the service difficult or impossible to attain for many individuals;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that the Government of Alberta advocate to the Government of Canada to add provisional psychologists, psychologists, and registered counsellors with the Canadian Counselling & Psychotherapy Association to the list of qualifying professions for the Canada Student Loan Forgiveness program, provided that their professional practices are located within a designated under-served rural or remote community within Alberta;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA urges the Government of Alberta to work in conjunction with the Association of Counselling Therapy of Alberta to create a regulatory body that would be responsible for developing, maintaining, and enforcing regulations, standards of practice, and codes of ethics to protect the public in the Province of Alberta.

Government Response

Alberta Advanced Education

Thank you for your letter to the Honourable Kaycee Madu, Deputy Premier and Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions, regarding RMA's Resolution 8-22F: Rural Mental Health Advocacy. As I am the Minister of Advanced Education, responsible for student aid, Minister Madu has asked me to respond to the portion of Resolution 8-22F focused on student aid, and appreciate the opportunity to do so.

Alberta's government is aware of the challenges rural municipalities are facing attracting and retaining mental health professionals. We are also aware of the challenges facing rural Albertans when trying to access mental health professionals within or close to their communities. I can assure you that the government is taking urgent action to ensure Albertans have access to world-class healthcare. The Healthcare Action Plan was recently announced and identifies immediate government actions to build a better healthcare system in Alberta. Please visit the Alberta government's Healthcare Action Plan website at www.alberta.ca/healthcare-action-plan.aspx to learn more.

The Ministry of Advanced Education is committed to ensuring student loan repayment remains affordable. Although Advanced Education does not provide loan forgiveness, the ministry does provide several supports to help borrowers manage their loan payments. This includes making student loans interest-free and payment-free while students are actively in studies and for six months after they complete their studies. These benefits are available to all Alberta student loan borrowers regardless of their profession or income level.

The Canada Student Financial Assistance Program has a loan forgiveness program for specific medical professionals. It is important to note that this program applies to a borrower's Canada student loan only. You can find more information about Canada student loan forgiveness, and which communities qualify as rural, on the Government of Canada's Canada Student Financial Assistance Program website.

As the Canada Student Financial Assistance Program is managed by the federal government, my ministry is unable to make any changes to the list of qualified professionals. Alberta is a member on the Inter-governmental Consultative Committee on Student Financial Assistance, a pan-Canadian table, providing advice and advocating provincial perspectives toward federal student financial assistance policy. I can assure you that my ministry staff will advocate at committee and subcommittee forums that provisional psychologists, psychologists, and registered counsellors with the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association should be considered for student financial assistance.

Alberta Health

The first resolved clause in this resolution calls on the Government of Alberta to advocate to the Government of Canada to add provisional psychologists, psychologists, and registered counsellors with the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA) to the list of qualifying professions for the Canada Student Loan Forgiveness program. To be eligible for the program, practices must be located within a designated underserved rural or remote community within Alberta. The second resolved clause is dealt with below.

The decision to regulate the profession of counselling therapy involves extensive consultations with various interest groups and within the health care system in order to assess the impact of regulation of this profession. It is important that we take the time to consider all relevant perspectives and to analyze potential impacts on the health care system, service providers, Indigenous communities and the public.

I appreciate that there is extensive support for the regulation of counselling therapists in Alberta. I ask for your patience as we undertake the additional consultations and analyses that we believe are necessary to support any decision by government about the regulation of counseling therapists in Alberta.

The psychologist profession is also regulated under the HPA within the College of Alberta Psychologists. The HPA protects certain titles for the purpose of transparency and public accountability, within the context of the provision of health services. These protected titles are set out in the HPA and relevant profession regulation to ensure only skilled and competent regulated members of a college can use these protected titles to provide safe and ethical care to Albertans.

This makes it easier for the public to identify regulated health professionals and, if necessary, to contact their regulatory colleges. This also ensures only regulated health professionals can use these protected titles. The Government of Alberta does not promote or advocate for including any protected titles with a college or an association for any profession.

Rural mental health in general — specifically, improving mental health supports for farming families in rural communities — is a priority for Alberta’s government. We support a number of programs, services, and resources for Albertans living in rural areas, including the expansion of Alberta 211, which provides information, referrals and crisis support via phone, text, chat, and website, including virtual and local mental health and addiction referrals and resources. Alberta’s government is also providing \$6.75 million in funding over two years to Counselling Alberta to provide both in-person and virtual mental health counselling services across Alberta.

Alberta Mental Health and Addiction provides grant funding to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) for the Rural Mental Health Project. Through this project, CMHA works with rural communities across Alberta to develop and implement local action plans to increase mental health awareness and improve overall mental health. Animators in each community are trained to lead a community engagement process to identify their unique local assets and challenges and develop a road map to improve mental health in their community. Between April 2021 and March 2022, the Rural Mental Health Network hosted 21 workshops and information sessions that were attended by more than 900 individuals. To date, community grants have been awarded to 55 projects for initiatives supporting support 66 communities through this project.

As the agency responsible for the delivery of health services in the province, AHS offers a number of phone, virtual, and in-person mental health services across Alberta, including community addiction and mental health clinics and a continuum of other programs and services. Albertans can find a complete listing of local mental health and addiction supports on the AHS website. Alberta Health also provides funding to primary care networks (PCNs) across Alberta that offer a variety of supports, including mental health services.

The Department of Health, AHS, Public Safety and Emergency Management, and police partners have been working together to improve police response to mental health calls across the province, including additional supports for rural communities. Supports in development include strategies to assist police in de-escalation and increased safety for all parties, guidance in identifying whether an individual should be conveyed to a designated facility for a mental health assessment, and improved linkages to community-based resources.

As well, Alberta’s government invested \$789,000 in 2021 to support system building and early implementation of the HealthIM System, which helps police officers assess the needs of a person experiencing a mental health crisis and then connects them to appropriate supports and services. Budget 2022 provides an additional \$1.6 million to continue the provincial rollout of HealthIM. While the Edmonton Police Service was the first to use the HealthIM platform in Alberta in July 2022, the platform has been rolled out to additional police forces in

Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Camrose, and the RCMP K Division Central and will continue to be implemented in most forces across the province over the next year in a phased approach. Alberta's government will work with police services to determine next steps.

The regional Police and Crisis Team (rPACT) expansion is one of several initiatives to support Alberta law enforcement in responding to mental health calls to reduce the strain on police resources. AHS Provincial Addiction and Mental Health, Justice and Solicitor General, and RCMP Community Policing are collaborating on the development of a three-year phased approach to provide 20 new rPACTs across the province. When the three-phase rPACT project is fully implemented, there will be 24-7 specialized policing services for 111 RCMP detachments and communities across the province.

The second resolved clause in this resolution urges Alberta's government to work with the Association of Counselling Therapy of Alberta (ACTA) to create a regulatory body responsible for developing, maintaining, and enforcing regulations, standards of practice, and codes of ethics to the public.

In September 2016, a consortium of 26 counselling professional associations, operating as FACT-Alberta, applied to regulate the profession of counselling therapy under the HPA and to protect the title of "counseling therapist" under that Act. This application was subsequently revised to include three professions within a proposed CCTA: counselling therapists, addiction counsellors, and child and youth care counsellors.

In 2018, the HPA was amended through a consequential amendment contained within the Mental Health Services Protection Act. That Act is now in force; however, the HPA amendment has not been proclaimed.

A precondition for the proclamation of the HPA amendment and the establishment of a CCTA was for the ACTA to make the professional regulation and for that regulation to be approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The ACTA, in collaboration with Alberta Health, developed a professional regulation to govern the profession of counselling therapists, addiction counsellors, and child and youth care counsellors, which subsequently underwent further review and analysis by Alberta Health.

Typically, the analysis of a proposed new regulation includes consultations; jurisdictional scans and evidence reviews; development of policy, standards, education and training programs; financial analysis; and legal advice to identify associated risks and benefits with the proposed new regulation.

On January 29, 2021, Alberta Health circulated a copy of the proposed regulation to various agencies for review and comment. Based on the feedback provided, it was determined that there was broad support for the proposed regulation; however, there were concerns or limited feedback from First Nations and Metis chiefs and the mental health service operators.

Alberta Health, in collaboration with the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction, is planning to initiate engagement and consultation with First Nations and Metis leadership and mental health service operators to gauge their support for the regulation of counseling therapists, addiction counsellors, and child and youth care counsellors within the CCTA under the HPA.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA appreciates the Government of Alberta's (GOA's) response to this resolution and the additional mental health supports that have been put into place for rural Alberta. However, the response does not indicate that the GOA will take any advocacy efforts to ensure that provisional psychologists, psychologists and registered counsellors with the CCPA will be included in the loan forgiveness program, provided that their practices is located in an under-served rural or remote community. Allowing these practitioners to participate in the loan

forgiveness program is a key recruitment strategy and is detrimental to the health and well being of rural Albertans.

Further, the response does not indicate that the GOA will work to create a regulatory body with the Association of Counselling Therapy Alberta (ACTA) to protect the public interest. However, the response did mention that they are investigating this as a potential avenue to increase the level of supports available and asked for patience. Although this promise is not an actionable item, the acknowledgement of the creation of a regulatory body as a solution is a step in the right direction.

RMA will continue to work with ACTA to advocate for the creation of this body and monitor progress on this issue.

Given that the resolution has not been addressed or actioned, RMA assigns this resolution the status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 9-22F

Renewable Energy Project Reclamation Requirements

Mountain View County and Foothills County

Carried as amended

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas**

WHEREAS the **Government of Alberta** (GOA), in line with the Government of Canada, have a mandate to transition to a low carbon economy; and

WHEREAS renewable energy has been determined to be one way to transition to a low carbon economy; and

WHEREAS increased development of renewable energy sources including wind, solar and geothermal energy projects is occurring throughout Alberta; and

WHEREAS the Alberta Utilities Commission is solely responsible for approvals of renewable energy projects on private lands; and

WHEREAS in June 2018, the GOA amended the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation to include renewable energy operations under the definition of specified land activities; and

WHEREAS the Conservation and Reclamation Directive for Renewable Energy Operations outlines an operator's obligation to reclaim specified land to equivalent capability; and

WHEREAS this obligation is intended to ensure renewable energy projects are properly reclaimed upon their decommissioning; and

WHEREAS the directive does not include a requirement to submit reclamation security; and

WHEREAS Section 619 of the *Municipal Government Act* states: that "a licence, permit, approval, or other authorization granted by the Natural Resources Conservation Board, Energy Resources Conservation Board, Alberta Energy Regulator, Alberta Energy and Utility Board or Alberta Utilities Commission prevails over municipal authority;"

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta implement a mandated collection of adequate securities for future reclamation of renewable energy projects on private lands, either by requiring renewable energy project proponents to post a reclamation surety bond as a condition of any renewable energy project approvals;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the amount of the required securities be calculated based on data-driven projections of actual reclamation costs to protect municipalities and residents of Alberta from incurring costs associated with the decommissioning of all renewable energy projects.

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas

The Government of Alberta is committed to ensuring renewable energy operations, such as solar and wind projects, are decommissioned and reclaimed responsibly when operations cease. Requirements for operators are outlined in Alberta's Conservation and Reclamation Directive for Renewable Energy Operations (available at open.alberta.ca).

Renewable energy operators are financially responsible for environmental obligations at the end of a project's life and must demonstrate to the Alberta Utilities Commission that they have sufficient funds to cover estimated decommissioning and reclamation costs. Operators must follow the commission's "Rule 007: Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations, Hydro Developments and Gas Utility Pipelines" (available at auc.ab.ca).

Landowners have the right to allow or deny access to their property for a solar or wind energy project, to negotiate reclamation security under their surface lease agreement, and to seek legal advice before signing an agreement regarding development on their property.

The mandate letter for my appointment as Minister of Environment and Protected Areas (available at open.alberta.ca) includes a commitment to bring reclamation requirements for renewable energy sources in line with the rest of the energy sector.

The mandate also includes a commitment to explore options with all relevant stakeholders — balancing the need to reduce liabilities and ensure landowners, municipalities, and Indigenous Peoples are satisfied with reclamation efforts. The Government of Alberta is using RMA feedback to consider how to address these commitments and will engage with the RMA if changes to provincial reclamation policies are considered.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

Although the Government of Alberta response indicates that renewable energy project proponents are already required to take responsibility for end of life management of projects under the Conservation and Reclamation Directive for Renewable Energy Operations, the intent of the resolution is to call on the Government of Alberta to amend the directive and AUC Rule 007 to move beyond requiring proponents to provide proof, and instead require them to provide an actual deposit in the form of a surety bond or similar means. While "proof" may be well intentioned, in the time between project construction and decommissioning, much can happen to the individual company, the provincial economy, the economics of the renewable industry, etc. that can render that point in time proof irrelevant when it comes time to actual reclaim the land.

RMA is also concerned with the Government of Alberta's emphasis on negotiations between industry and private landowners. This is an important component of the project development process, but reclamation has broader public interest impacts, and many landowners lack the technical capacity or resources to properly hold industry accountable for reclamation obligations.

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

Resolution 10-22F

Sustainability of Small Rural Schools

Northern Sunrise County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Education**

WHEREAS access to good quality education is vital for the youth of Alberta no matter where they live; and

WHEREAS recent changes in provincial grant funding to schools has not been effective in addressing the challenges of adequately funding rural and remote schools, particularly those with low enrollments; and

WHEREAS it is difficult to secure qualified professionals to deliver services in more remote areas of the province and there is an expectation for higher pay in remote locations; and

WHEREAS some rural school divisions must supply teacher housing in remote schools to attract teachers to come to their communities; and

WHEREAS large geographic areas make it much more costly to provide operational supports for education in areas such as mental health, transportation services, and facility operations; and

WHEREAS student transportation costs are constantly increasing in recent years; and

WHEREAS requiring students to travel long distances to school reduces time available for learning, extra-curricular, and non-school activities; and

WHEREAS because of distances and remote locations, it is very expensive to acquire replacement parts for repairing and maintaining school buildings and school bus fleets; and

WHEREAS many operational costs to maintain facilities associated with contracting services such as waste removal, snow removal, grounds maintenance, and building maintenance have much higher rates in rural and remote communities in the province; and

WHEREAS large increases in insurance costs over the past three years (such costs have doubled in some school districts) has further strained the operational budgets of rural schools; and

WHEREAS schools in northern parts of the province face higher utility costs associated with colder weather, longer heating seasons, and delivery costs for the utility; and

WHEREAS the federal carbon tax has added operational costs for facilities and transportation areas for school divisions;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request that the Government of Alberta engage with rural school boards and rural municipalities to develop solutions to support the sustainability of small rural schools.

Government Response

Alberta Education

Alberta Education recognizes that rural schools face unique challenges in the delivery of educational services. Small rural schools are unable to realize economies of scale on staffing and other expenses and can be disproportionately affected by fluctuations in student enrolment.

Alberta's education system transitioned to the current Kindergarten to Grade 12 funding model in the 2020/21 school year. Funding is allocated based on the three-year weighted moving average (WMA) full-time equivalent enrolment instead of on a per-student basis. The WMA methodology helps to smooth fluctuations in enrolment growth and alleviate uncertainty of funding. Using WMA enrolments benefits school authorities experiencing enrolment decline which are typically rural schools by ensuring predictable funding ahead of the school year for operational planning. This funding certainty provides transition time for shrinking authorities to adjust to lower enrolment levels.

This model also includes the Rural Small Schools Grant, which was noted in RMA's resolution and is designed to address challenges with operating small rural schools. Under this model, these schools are provided a guaranteed block of funding to ensure that funding is predictable and sustainable. In Budget 2022, the funding rate for this grant was increased by one per cent, matching increases to the base instruction rate, to ensure schools funded under this model were treated fairly. This grant totalled \$127 million for the 2022/23 school year.

School authorities receive funding for school operations and maintenance. The Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Grant is provided to school authorities to address their responsibilities for the operation, maintenance, safety and security of all school buildings. In the 2022/23 school year, we invested \$681 million to support the day-to-day upkeep of school facilities, including \$594 million for the O&M Grant and \$87 million for the Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal Grant. The department increased the O&M Grant rate by one per cent in the 2022/23 school year to address increased cost pressures related to the operation and maintenance of school buildings.

School authorities and community partners indicated that the previous Plant Operations and Maintenance Grant was not meeting the needs of schools. In particular, a focus on per-student funding did not adequately direct funds to where they were needed. Under the current funding model, the O&M Grant shifts away from a primarily per-student model to an equitable school space model. This change provides increased funding certainty for school authorities, as school space remains relatively constant year over year. The current calculation reflects the actual utilization of schools because it focuses on the instructional area and not gross area. This approach is beneficial in that it focuses on usable instructional space and considers non-traditional and emerging school designs.

Alberta has a diverse geographic landscape with many regions that face unique challenges and have unique needs. The Geographic Grant is provided to school authorities to better address their geographic location contexts and enhance equity and fairness in availability of education opportunities. Factors such as rurality, latitude, sparsity and area served by the school jurisdiction are taken into consideration for the distribution of this grant. Many rural school authorities have received significant funding support through the grant. In the 2022/23 school year, the Geographic Grant provided \$161 million in financial support to school authorities.

I recognize school transportation costs and rural ride times are a concern for rural families. In November 2022, I received my new mandate letter from the Honourable Danielle Smith, Premier of Alberta. The letter specifies pursuing opportunities and strategies to address cost pressures and ride times for school boards and families. We continue to review transportation throughout the province and will be implementing an updated transportation funding model for the 2023/24 school year.

Education funding under Budget 2022 increased by \$142 million to more than \$8.4 billion for the 2022/23 fiscal year. This increased funding ensures school authorities can hire the required number of teachers and support staff, address increases in property and vehicle insurance premiums and mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning. Alberta Education also provided in-year funding for the new teacher salary

agreement, the Fuel Price Contingency Program and support for Ukrainian students. Alberta Education's funding framework provides school authorities with increased flexibility to allocate funds to meet their local needs. We respect the autonomy of school authorities to manage their resources and make decisions that reflect local priorities.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA appreciates the Government of Alberta's funding mechanisms to support rural school capital and operational costs. There are significant barriers that rural schools face and this funding will help to alleviate the issues faced by rural communities. Although the funding is a step in the right direction, there is a further need to develop strategies that will reduce the issues faced by rural schools. The development of these strategies will require cooperative work between the province and the municipalities and school boards impacted. In rural communities, schools play a role beyond education; they are often viewed as communities hubs and a symbol of a rural community's resilience. Engaging with school authorities and rural leaders on how to best leverage schools and support their long-term viability is a required next step beyond funding.

RMA assigns this resolution the status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to advocate for provincial engagement on this issue.

Resolution 11-22F

Disparity in Electricity Distribution and Transmission Rates

County of Grande Prairie

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy, Alberta Affordability and Utilities**

WHEREAS Alberta's electricity transmission and distribution system is facilitated by various service areas, serviced by different companies, resulting in a disparity in pricing; and

WHEREAS electricity prices, which are regulated by the Alberta Utilities Commission for residential, farm, and commercial customers, are extraordinarily high in some service areas; and

WHEREAS in 2021, the average residential customer with 7200 kWh of consumption paid between \$239.28 (ENMAX) and \$339.72 (ATCO) per year in transmission charges; and

WHEREAS in 2021, the average residential customer with 7200 kWh of consumption paid between \$308.40 (ENMAX) and \$1,007.16 (ATCO) in distribution charges; and

WHEREAS the costs of transmission and distribution impact both purchased and solar energy, resulting in economic challenges to micro-generation;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate for the Government of Alberta to adopt a new electricity pricing model for transmission and distribution that eliminates the disparity in pricing across Alberta.

Government Response

Alberta Affordability and Utilities

Distribution and transmission charges cover the cost of installing, operating, and maintaining the infrastructure used to transmit electricity to customers. As a result of greater geographical distances and lower population density, distribution rates in rural areas are typically higher than in urban areas.

The *Electric Utilities Act* requires that each owner of an electric distribution system prepare a distribution tariff for the purpose of recovering the prudent costs of providing electric distribution service by means of the owner's electric distribution system.

While changes to the current approach of assigning distribution costs to each specific region serviced by a distribution facility owner are not being actively considered at this time, I have noted your comments for consideration as the Ministry of Affordability and Utilities proceeds with the implementation of our mandate of providing an affordable and reliable electricity system for Albertans.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta acknowledges that rural areas are facing higher distribution charges than urban areas. RMA recognizes that the new pricing model will require significant work to determine which model will be best for Albertan municipalities, however the Ministry of Affordability and Utilities notes that the current model is not being reviewed or considered for change. Based on the mandate that was provided to the Ministry recently, RMA and its members believe that this is a key solution to making utilities more affordable for rural Albertans.

RMA appreciates the Minister of Affordability and Utilities plan to include this in the implementation of their mandate. However, until meaningful action is taken, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 12-22F

Restore Grants-in-Lieu of Taxes for Public Housing Management Authorities

Big Lakes County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services, Alberta Municipal Affairs**

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta eliminated grants-in-lieu of taxes for seniors' apartments and family housing units operated by public housing management bodies in 2015; and

WHEREAS prior to 2015, municipalities utilized these grants-in-lieu of taxes to help offset the cost of services that are provided to all citizens and property in the municipality including seniors' apartments and family housing units; and

WHEREAS since 2015, municipalities have lost approximately \$16 million in revenues every year; and

WHEREAS municipalities have no choice but to off-set that revenue loss by increasing property taxes from an already strained property tax system to maintain current service levels; and

WHEREAS section 362 of the *Municipal Government Act* exempts any interest held by the Crown in right of Alberta from property taxation; and

WHEREAS section 20 of the *Alberta Housing Act* (AHA) states that the **Alberta Social Housing Corporation** (ASHC) is an agent of the Crown in right of Alberta; and

WHEREAS section 27(1) of the AHA provides that the ASHC may each year pay to any municipality within which any of the ASHC's real property is situated a grant not exceeding the amount that would be recoverable by the municipality if the property were subject to the property taxes of the municipality for that year; and

WHEREAS section 27(2) of the AHA states that no municipality is entitled as of right to a grant under this section; and

WHEREAS the majority of revenue that is raised by a municipality to cover the cost of its operations is from property taxes and any reduction in revenues must be borne by the other property taxpayers of the municipality;

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).

Government Response

Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services

Thank you for your letter regarding the Rural Municipalities of Alberta's (RMA's) Resolution 1222F: Restore Grants-in-Lieu of Taxes for Public Housing Management Authorities, which was endorsed at the RMA's 2022 fall convention. I have reviewed Resolution 12-22F and provide the following responses:

- Excerpt from Resolution: *“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.”*

Thank you for this suggestion. Increasing the use of rent supplements aligns with the goals of *Stronger Foundations: Alberta’s 10-year strategy to improve and expand affordable housing*, released in November 2021. The strategy will support up to 82,000 households, which is an increase of more than 40 per cent, or up to 25,000 more households, by adding more housing units and providing more rent assistance subsidies. The government aims to increase rent supplements to support an additional 12,000 households and is currently exploring opportunities to further increased funding toward the Rent Supplement Program, including the Rent Assistance Benefit.

- Excerpt from Resolution: *“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.”*

Grants-in-lieu of taxes for social housing properties were eliminated in 2015, and currently, government is not considering reinstating these grants. Government’s focus continues to be on working with municipalities toward the growth of affordable housing through Stronger Foundations. Providing property tax exemptions to social and affordable housing is one of the tools available for municipalities to partner with social and affordable housing providers in your community. We appreciate your contribution to the development of the affordable housing sector and look forward to continued collaboration.

Eliminating these voluntary grants in 2015 was consistent with the treatment of taxation on seniors’ lodges and nursing homes. Previously, the Alberta Social Housing Corporation (ASHC) provided grants-in-lieu of taxes to housing management bodies to pay municipalities on its behalf. Properties owned by or transferred from the ASHC on the condition that they continue to be used as affordable housing are not subject to municipal taxation.

- Excerpt from Resolution: *“FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (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).”*

Given that government is not considering reinstating grants-in-lieu of taxes at this time, amending section 27 of the Alberta Housing Act is not currently feasible. Under section 27 of the Act, grants-in-lieu of taxes may be provided to municipalities where the ASHC owns property. Government reserves the right to maintain its discretion on this matter.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates a plan to respond to one of the three asks of resolution 12-22F. RMA is pleased to see the commitment to action the 10-year strategy’s recommendation to increase rent supports. However, as the response does not commit to restoring grants in-lieu-of taxes for public housing bodies or addressing specific changes to the Alberta Housing Act, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part**.

Resolution 13-22F

Enhanced Wetland Replacement Program

Smoky Lake County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Protected Areas**

WHEREAS wetlands are a vital part of Alberta's ecological landscape and necessary for a sustainable economy and healthy communities; and

WHEREAS the **Wetland Replacement Program** (WRP) aims to re-establish wetlands in partnership with Albertans by providing resources for collaborative restoration projects across the province; and

WHEREAS under the Alberta Wetland Policy, the WRP will offset wetland area lost due to activities on the land; and

WHEREAS a priority of the Alberta Wetland Policy and WRP is to replace wetlands within municipalities and watersheds that have had the highest amount of lost wetland area since 2015, as well as areas of high historical loss; and

WHEREAS the WRP focuses on fostering partnerships with municipalities and non-profits that have a vested interest in wetland replacement; and

WHEREAS the WRP contemplates wetland restoration which includes returning natural/historic area and hydrological functions to a drained, partially drained, or filled-in wetland, and wetland construction, which includes creating a wetland on a site that was historically non-wetland; and

WHEREAS the WRP could become a vehicle to educate Albertans about our natural environments, as well as enhance community wellness, recreation, and tourism opportunities;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta engage with the Government of Alberta to simplify and expand the eligibility for projects under the Wetland Replacement Program.

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas

The Wetland Replacement Program focuses on replacing lost wetland and has two eligible project types: wetland restoration and wetland construction. Working with participants in 2020 and 2021, the program replaced over 200 hectares of wetland and provided over \$5 million in funding. In 2022, the program replaced over 150 hectares of lost wetland and provided over \$5.6 million in funding.

Some wetland enhancement projects, such as making ponds deeper to increase storage capacity, do not result in an increase in wetland area, so they are not eligible for the program. Wetland enhancements that result in increased function (but not area) may be eligible for funding through other programs, such as the department's Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program. Projects eligible under this program include enhancing wetland hydrologic and habitat functions through native vegetation plantings and bio-engineering, natural stormwater management, riparian fencing, and off-stream watering systems.

The Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program is similar to the Canada Natural Infrastructure Fund – it is a competitive grant program that funds organizations to develop and use nature-based solutions, such as wetlands, for climate resilience. Since 2015, the department has invested \$40 million in the program toward

project outcomes that support economic development, community wellness, and stewardship. You can find more information about both programs at alberta.ca by searching for each program by name.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response does not address the intent of the resolution: to expand the project eligibility scope of the Wetland Replacement Program to include projects that enhance existing wetlands or redevelop constructed wetlands to provide enhanced community benefits. RMA will follow up with Alberta Environment and Protected Areas as to potentially expanding the Wetland Replacement Program. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 14-22F

Third Party Inspections for Gravel Pit Reclamation

Stettler County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Protected Areas**

WHEREAS **Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP)**, through legislation, maintains control of all registrations for Class I gravel pits (five hectares or larger); and

WHEREAS AEP, through legislation, maintains responsibility for inspection, compliance and enforcement of reclamation of Class 1 gravel pits; and

WHEREAS the ***Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (EPEA)*** requires applications for reclamation certificates be made to the Director or inspectors; and

WHEREAS the EPEA requires the Minister of Environment and Parks or designated Director to appoint inspectors for the purpose of that Act;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to amend the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* to allow qualified third parties to conduct inspections and approve reclamation certificate applications for Class I gravel pits.

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas

Environment and Protected Areas shares your desire to improve outcomes for certifying sand and gravel pits. To that end, we took steps in summer 2022 to address wait times and reduce red tape by hiring more inspectors and providing enhanced training. Reclamation inspectors have been working hard to reduce the backlog of reclamation certificate applications and inquiries, and the department is now better-positioned to conduct inquiries on new applications in a more timely way. I am pleased to tell you that all of the received pit reclamation certificate applications are now undergoing review.

In addition, the Government of Alberta is developing the Digital Regulatory Assurance System (DRAS), which supports economic development and reduces unnecessary red tape. Government will continue to roll out DRAS in stages until 2024, with all regulatory applications moved online. The new system will provide clearer expectations for applicants and more efficient decisions. In addition, we are improving reclamation and closure guidance for staff and industry. The department is testing a draft Directive for Reclamation Certificate Site Assessments for Pits and Quarries for Cultivated Land, and will publish it when engagement and testing is complete.

It is important to determine whether the changes underway will decrease wait times before we consider further changes to inspection and reclamation certificate processes.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates that the gravel pit inspection backlog has been reduced due to the hiring of additional inspectors and improved training. While this is a positive development, the resolution requests that the Government of Alberta amend the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* to allow the hiring of qualified third-parties to undertake inspections. From RMA's perspective, this amendment would not undermine or replace the current inspection process, but rather provide another "tool in the toolbox" if the backlog returns in the future.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to advocate for the inclusion of this enabling clause in the Act.

Resolution 16-22F

Exemption of Natural Gas and Propane for Agriculture Under the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act*

Parkland County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Environment and Climate Change Canada, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada**

WHEREAS the federal *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* (GGPPA) applies fuel charges to natural gas and propane used in agriculture operations, with the exception of greenhouses; and

WHEREAS the cost to Canadian farmers as a result of the GGPPA's fuel charges for natural gas and propane are estimated to be \$235 million dollars by 2024; and

WHEREAS the private Member's Bill C-234, *An Act to Amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act*, which will provide relief for the fuel charge, was given second reading in the House of Commons; and

WHEREAS federal programs such as the Agricultural Clean Technology Program and tax rebate programs were aimed at providing relief to farmers from the fuel surcharges for natural gas and propane; and

WHEREAS these programs have proven difficult to access and are oversubscribed, or do not cover the actual costs expended by farmers; and

WHEREAS the GGPPA's fuel charges to natural gas and propane place Canadian farmers at a competitive disadvantage in comparison to international competitors who are not subject to fuel charges;

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.

Government Response

Environment and Climate Change Canada

On behalf of the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, I am responding to your correspondence of November 29, 2022, concerning the Rural Municipalities of Alberta Resolution 16-22F: Exemption of Natural Gas and Propane for Agriculture Under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act.

The matter you raise is the responsibility of the Department of Finance Canada. I am therefore forwarding your correspondence to the office of the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance, for consideration.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

As the response from Environment and Climate Change Canada indicates this resolution has been forwarded to the Department of Finance Canada, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Incomplete Information**.

Bill C-234 has been referred to the Senate and the RMA continues to express interest in participating as a witness when this bill is debated. RMA will provide updates as advocacy on this bill progresses within the Federal Government.

Resolution 17-22F

Government Funding For Nurse Practitioners

Beaver County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Health**

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta is responsible for the delivery of medical services to Albertans; and

WHEREAS there is a shortage of physicians in the province, particularly in rural Alberta; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta established the Rural Physician Action Plan in 1991 to support practicing rural physicians; and

WHEREAS the Rural Physician Action Plan met with limited success, and rural Alberta municipalities continue to struggle with the attraction and retention of physicians; and

WHEREAS Alberta has more than 800 licensed nurse practitioners, with 30 to 100 new graduates annually; and

WHEREAS nurse practitioners are health care professionals with training to provide essential health care services; and

WHEREAS nurse practitioners are completely independent health care professionals who could work in urgent care facilities, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, community clinics, primary care offices, and hospitals; and

WHEREAS most of Alberta's nurse practitioners work in hospitals due to lack of a salary-based funding model which would compensate them fairly and equitably, and enable the establishment of independent practices throughout Alberta; and

WHEREAS adequate Government of Alberta funding for nurse practitioners will alleviate the shortage of physicians and expand the reach of health care to rural Albertans of all ages;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to establish a salary-based funding model that will fairly and equitably compensate nurse practitioners for work in rural local care facilities and rural independent clinics.

Government Response

Alberta Health

This resolution urges the Government of Alberta to establish a salary-based funding model to fairly and equitably compensate nurse practitioners (NPs) for work in rural local care facilities and rural independent clinics.

Alberta's government recognizes the importance of NPs in the health system and is committed to providing Albertans with greater choice in their health care providers by increasing the number of NPs in Alberta. Currently, the province funds/employs NPs to deliver services through AHS and the Primary Care Networks (the PCN NP Support Program).

The PCN NP Support Program was initiated in 2019 to increase the number of NPs working in primary care through targeted funding. The goal of the support programs is to:

- increase access to primary health care (e.g. after hours, weekends, rural/remote areas);
- meet unmet demand for primary health care services;

- provide care to underserved populations; and
- support chronic disease management.

As of November 2022 there are a total of 55.29 full-time equivalent NPs registered with the PCNs. Some of these NPs are working in rural Alberta, but we also recognize that more can be done.

Moving forward, we are continuing the work of the Modernizing Alberta's Primary Care System initiative and assessing alternative compensation models for family physicians and NPs. I am pleased to let you know that the work on a NP funding model is underway.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA is pleased to hear that the Government of Alberta is working to create a funding model for NPs in Alberta. A funding model that allows NPs to practice in rural and still be compensated fairly for their work is key to the recruitment of practitioners and could ease the current stress placed on the health care system due to lack of access.

RMA staff have collaborated and discussed this issue with the Nurse Practitioner Association of Alberta (NPAA) and will continue to monitor progress. Current advocacy efforts include the push for NPAA to be involved in the development process.

As the province develops this model and more information becomes available on the status of developing the salary-based funding model, RMA will revisit the status of this resolution, however as it stands currently, the resolution has been assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 18-22F

Regulations for Motorists Passing School Buses with Amber Lights Flashing

Clearwater County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors**

WHEREAS roads or highways in Alberta are governed by the *Traffic Safety Act* (TSA); and

WHEREAS the Lieutenant Governor in Council may enact regulations related to the rules of the road pursuant to section 112 of the TSA; and

WHEREAS the TSA allows peace officers and police officers to fine drivers that contravene speed regulations in school zones or pass school buses stopped with red lights flashing to drop off or pickup students; and

WHEREAS there are no provincial regulations for drivers overtaking school buses that have stopped with alternating amber lights flashing; and

WHEREAS Alberta Transportation's recommends that "if you pass a school bus that has its alternating amber lights flashing, pass with caution"; and

WHEREAS there are speed regulations for many of the other higher risk areas or activities on roadways, including passing emergency vehicles, passing plow trucks, and driving through construction, playground and school zones;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta urge the Government of Alberta to enact or amend legislation to address motorists passing school buses with amber lights flashing, and that the legislation include the following:

- **setting a maximum speed limit of 60km/hour or slower on all roadways when passing school buses, in both directions, with flashing amber lights;**
- **providing regulations for roadside signage for school bus stops on primary highways in Alberta.**

Government Response

Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors

Section 71 of the Use of Highway and Rules of the Road Regulation requires drivers to slow down when passing a bus with flashing amber lights, so they can pass in a cautious manner. While the speed to slow down to is not specified, students are not at risk during passing, as they are not loading or unloading from the bus. Alternating flashing school bus red lights must be used when students are loading and unloading, which require drivers to stop. Drivers are educated on the importance of driving cautiously and requirements for passing school buses with flashing amber lights and stopping for those with flashing red lights. You may find this information in the Driver's Guide available online at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/6198713>.

In May 2021, the Minister of Education released the Student Transportation Task Force report that outlined key challenges experienced by the student transportation industry, recommendations to address them, and a plan on how the government will take action to consider the recommendations. Vehicles passing at unsafe speeds while the alternating flashing amber lights are activated did not appear in the report. However, instances of flybys where vehicles pass despite alternating flashing red lights activated was included. Transportation and Economic Corridors is participating in Alberta Education's working group that is discussing the Student Transportation Task Force report recommendations. The insights and suggestions included in your

letter have been forwarded to department staff for consideration during future reviews of applicable legislation.

There are several factors to consider when updating highway signage for school bus stops. For example, school bus stop location changes frequently occur and the department will need to determine how best to approach potential signage changes without distracting drivers. We appreciate your organization's recommendations and commitment to school bus safety and will continue to explore options on this topic.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates that there have been issues raised as it relates to school buses and student safety. However, the specific issues raised in this resolution have not been addressed through the Task Force, nor the ministry itself. The response also indicated that any changes made will need to go through a significant review process in order to ensure safety standards are met.

Further, it is appreciated that this letter was forwarded to the appropriate staff for consideration, however this action is not enough as the resolution specifically calls for setting a maximum speed limit of 60km/hour or slower on all roadways when passing school buses, in both directions, with flashing amber lights or providing regulations for roadside signage for school bus stops on primary highways in Alberta. As a result, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**, and will continue to advocate on this issue.

Resolution 19-22F

Portion of Funding from Public Lands Camping Pass Directed to Municipalities

Clearwater County

Carried

► ***Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Forestry, Parks and Tourism***

WHEREAS according to the Public Lands Amendment Act, the Government of Alberta is committed to sustainable recreation management that ensures that public land is accessible to all Albertans for personal enjoyment and sustainable outdoor recreation; and

WHEREAS as per section 9.1 of the Public Lands Act, the Lieutenant Governor in Council can authorize the Minister of Environment and Parks to impose fees relating to the use and occupation of public land including the carrying on of activities on public land; and

WHEREAS Ministerial Order 52/2021 – Public Lands Camping Pass requires a valid “Public Lands Camping Pass” (Camping Pass) for every person entering on and occupying public lands within the pass area for the purpose of camping at a cost of \$30 annually or \$20 for a three-day pass; and

WHEREAS Albertans recognize the benefits from sustainable outdoor recreation and the Government of Alberta is committed to ensuring the costs are shared in a way that is fair for all Albertans; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta is committed to using fees collected for recreational uses of public land for purposes related to the maintenance and management of public land and recreation and public safety on public land; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Environment and Parks states that the proceeds from Camping Pass fees will be used to upgrade infrastructure, improve public education, fund conservation officers on the ground, enhance public safety and ensure better environmental and waste management; and

WHEREAS municipal resources such as fire services, peace officers and solid waste services, along with municipal facilities and washrooms are relied upon in support of recreational activities on public lands; and

WHEREAS there is no current funding structure for municipalities to recoup any portion of these municipal services costs associated with camping on public lands; and

WHEREAS local community or volunteer groups, such as search and rescue along with sports, camping and trails management groups are also impacted by recreational activities on public lands; and

WHEREAS there is no direct funding structure for community groups to recoup any portion of additional costs or services associated with the use of public lands; and

WHEREAS municipalities should be consulted for public lands infrastructure upgrades and waste management planning related to Camping Pass funding use, as those plans may directly and indirectly impact municipalities; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) requests that the Government of Alberta provide a portion of the revenue generated from the Public Lands Camping Pass to municipalities with adjacent public lands for the purpose of offsetting additional costs of municipal fire services, peace officers and solid waste services, along with municipal facilities and washrooms associated with recreational use of public lands;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA requests the Government of Alberta establish a program, funded by a portion of the Public Lands Camping Pass funds, for municipalities to be a coordinating agency for local stewardship and community groups impacted by public lands use.

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas

The Government of Alberta is committed to sustainable recreation management, including ongoing work to implement the Trails Act and sustainable fee framework. Government recognizes that communities next to public lands are impacted by high recreational use.

Recreation fees, such as off-highway vehicle registration fees and the Public Lands Camping Pass, help government implement important conservation commitments, including public outreach, as well as trail and watercourse crossing maintenance. Since its introduction in June 2021, the pass has generated \$2.5 million.

It is important to note that the department invests significantly more into managing recreation than just the revenue generated by the pass. For example, Environment and Protected Areas and Clearwater County are partnering on the Highway 11 Rail Trail to develop a multi-user trail system along an abandoned rail line – a project that costs approximately \$10 million. Municipalities are important partners in recreation, and the Alberta government continues to look for opportunities to invest with municipalities when funds are available.

Municipalities are also important partners in trail planning, which is underway for several trails and trail networks of interest on public lands in the eastern slopes. Environment and Protected Areas relies on this collaborative process to support mutually beneficial outcomes for recreation on public lands, including conservation and increased tourism opportunities. Trail management plans will incorporate the needs of the area's other land uses, such as resource development activities, as well as protection of ecologically sensitive areas and the interests of Indigenous Peoples, stakeholders, and nearby communities.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response acknowledges the impacts of provincial recreation areas on neighboring municipalities yet does not provide a subsequent plan or approach to consider how such municipalities can be better supported. The examples provided in the government response are linked to specific provincial responsibilities within the recreation areas themselves, or special, one-time capital-focused partnerships with municipalities which (while appreciated) are not relevant to the intent of the resolution.

While the Government of Alberta has implemented the Public Lands Camping Pass because public use of such lands causes direct capital and maintenance expenses for government, municipalities that incur related impacts as neighbors and even provide services within the public lands have no specialized tool or fund to offset these costs. While project-specific partnerships with municipalities are certainly a positive approach on the part of the province, a revenue-sharing mechanism that recognizes the spillover costs of such recreation areas is required.

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

Resolution 20-22F

Lost Road Closure Files

Smoky Lake County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors**

WHEREAS under the **Municipal Government Act** (MGA), municipalities in Alberta are responsible for the “direction, control and management of all roads within the municipality”; and

WHEREAS in accordance with section 22 the MGA, no road in a municipality that is subject to the direction, control and management of the municipality may be closed except by bylaw, or where council determines that a road that is described in a surveyed road plan is no longer required for use by the travelling public because an alternate route exists, then by resolution; and

WHEREAS no road may be closed by resolution or by bylaw unless the resolution is approved by the Minister of Transportation, or in the case of a bylaw, before it receives second reading; and

WHEREAS seeking the Minister’s approval is a lengthy process, normally requiring months or even years; and

WHEREAS in accordance with section 188 of the MGA, if a bylaw does not receive its third reading within two years of its first reading, it is deemed to have expired; and

WHEREAS road closure files have previously been lost or misplaced by Alberta Transportation, which requires municipalities to re-start the process;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) requests that the Government of Alberta streamline the Minister of Transportation’s approval processes associated with municipal road closures;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA requests that the Government of Alberta create a digital tracking system that would ensure bylaws or resolutions are not misplaced or lost by Alberta Transportation.

Government Response

Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors

In May 2022, Transportation and Economic Corridors updated the recently launched Roadside Planning and Application Tracking Hub (RPATH) application to streamline municipal road closure processes.

RPATH introduces new features and functionality not previously available to RMA members:

- RPATH now allows municipalities to submit road closure requests in digital format directly to my department’s district offices.
- RMA members can log into RPATH to see where an application is within Transportation and Economic Corridors’ review/approval system.
- RMA members can leave important follow-up messages or questions within RPATH for response/action by department staff, and department staff can
- leave messages for municipalities in RPATH.

Municipal Road Closure and Service Road Agreement applications should now be submitted to RPATH. Please visit www.alberta.ca/roadside-planning-and-applicationtracking-hub-rpath.aspx for more information. Transportation and Economic Corridors is confident RPATH will help provide a level of service RMA members expect and deserve.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta's response outlines the Roadside Planning and Application Tracking Hub (RPATH), a new program intended to streamline municipal road closure processes. This program includes features which aim to make information more readily available to members.

This resolution asks specifically for the Government of Alberta to streamline application processes for road closure processes and create a digital hub which will track bylaws and resolutions within Alberta Transportation. Although RPATH appears to streamline the process for applications, there is no indication that Alberta Transportation has developed a system to track and store bylaws and resolutions as they relate to municipal road closures. As only one part of this resolution has been addressed, RMA assigns this a status of **Accepted in Part**.

Resolution 21-22F

Loss of Agricultural Land to Renewable Energy Projects

Mountain View County

Carried

► ***Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation***

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada have a mandate to transition to a low carbon economy; and

WHEREAS renewable energy has been determined to be one way to transition to a low carbon economy; and

WHEREAS renewable energy projects in Alberta have been and continue to be located on productive agricultural lands; and

WHEREAS Alberta's *Renewable Energy Act* has mandated that 30% of electricity generated must come from renewable energy sources by 2030; and

WHEREAS the Alberta Electric System Operator calculates, for 2021, 17% of electricity generation in Alberta comes from renewable energy sources; and

WHEREAS achieving this growth in renewable energy generation by 2030 could result, according to industry calculations, in a further 120,000 acres (187.5 sections) of agricultural land being lost; and

WHEREAS no quantitative studies have been completed in Alberta that calculate the overall effect to the economy from the loss of agricultural land and subsequent food production as the result of renewable energy projects;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta request the Government of Alberta to work collaboratively on policy that will find a balance between the development of renewable energy and protection of valuable agriculture lands.

Government Response

Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation

In 2016, the *Renewable Energy Act* established the "30 in 30" target, which states at least 30 per cent of the electric energy produced in Alberta must be produced from renewable energy resources by 2030. In addition, the deregulated electricity market and rich solar and wind resources have resulted in a surge of investment in renewable energy projects in Alberta. Protecting individual property rights, conserving Alberta's finite agricultural land base and the growth of renewable energy resources are important – and at times conflicting – priorities.

Agriculture and Irrigation (AGI) is committed to working collaboratively with Rural Municipalities of Alberta and other stakeholders to identify issues with commercial solar developments on agricultural land and opportunities to resolve them.

Alberta Affordability and Utilities

Electricity projects must be approved by the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC), who review all projects to ensure that they are in the public interest. The AUC's review process takes into consideration impacts to people, land, and the environment and can include noise, visual impact, traffic/roadways, land use, impacts to irrigation, and a variety of other environmental impacts such as species at risk, native grasses, water, wastewater, and conservation of soil.

Commercial wind and solar developments are only built on private land in Alberta and provide another source of revenue for landowners. Respecting property rights is a tenet of the Government of Alberta and limiting development options for private landowners would infringe on these rights. The AUC does not determine if and where in the province power generation should occur as electric generation is deregulated in Alberta.

The AUC decision-making process is independent and individual project applications are not influenced by government departments outside alignment with relevant legislation. I would encourage the RMA and its members to contact the AUC to discuss the value of agricultural lands to the local communities and how this can be further considered in its assessment process.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

Based on the response from Alberta Affordability and Utilities, the Government of Alberta has determined that the balance between protecting prime agricultural land and developing renewable energy projects remains in the hands of the AUC. However, RMA members have had considerable challenges in working with the AUC in relation to approvals of specific developments. It is also unclear if and how the AUC considers agricultural land preservation within their decision-making process. As the AUC's role and mandate exists through provincial legislation, it is clear that the government can issue orders to the AUC to amend its process which would ensure that municipalities are consulted in the project approval process and that prime agricultural land is protected.

The response from Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation is slightly more encouraging, as it acknowledges that balancing the introduction of renewable energy and preserving agricultural land is critical to the future of rural Alberta.

The RMA has formed a member committee to review the mandates of quasi-judicial agencies, as well as if and to what extent they act in the public interest and the role of municipalities in their approval processes. Through this committee and corresponding report, RMA hopes to have recommendations to put forward by Fall 2023 that will help to address the lack of consideration for agricultural land preservation when siting renewable energy projects.

While no specific policy to preserve agricultural land is proposed, RMA is pleased to see a commitment to work collaboratively to develop a solution. However, until this work commences or more details are provided by the Government of Alberta as to how this balance will be achieved, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**. RMA will follow up with Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation to learn more about developing a path forward.

Resolution 23-22F

Small Scale Generation Regulation – Interconnection Challenges

MD of Taber

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy**

WHEREAS Alberta’s Micro-generation Regulation was implemented in January 2008 to allow individuals to generate electricity for their personal use while providing excess electricity to the grid; and

WHEREAS when the Micro-generation Regulation was passed, the Alberta Utilities Commission implemented Rule 24 to simplify approvals, interconnection and operating agreements between micro-generation customers and wire owners (utility companies); and

WHEREAS due to the effectiveness of Rule 24, the Alberta’s micro-generation program has been very successful, resulting in the installation of 8,163 solar energy systems with a combined generation capacity of 122.6 **Megawatt** (MW) as of May 2022; and

WHEREAS the development of utility scale solar projects has greatly accelerated in Alberta with 18 projects totalling 892 MW of generation capacity completed between December 2017 and May 2022; and

WHEREAS the utility scale solar projects under development in Alberta require an average of 2.6 hectares of land per MW of solar generation capacity and average 130.5 hectares per project; and

WHEREAS the rapid pace of development of these projects is resulting in an increasing demand for land that is needed for agricultural production; and

WHEREAS the **Small Scale Generation Regulation** (SSGR) is a regulatory framework established in Alberta for the purpose of facilitating distribution-connected alternative and renewable generation sized to supply electricity to the grid; and

WHEREAS according to the Government of Alberta, the SSGR was created to fill a gap between micro-generation and large utility-scale renewable energy projects, to make it “easier for communities to develop their own renewable energy projects” and to provide a framework for community generation to enable individuals or local organizations to partner on small-scale renewable energy projects such as wind, biomass, hydro or solar that provide community benefits; and

WHEREAS the “community generation” designation within the SSGR includes a requirement to demonstrate the benefits a community receives from generation projects, such as revenues, local jobs, training opportunities, new social programs or new infrastructure; and

WHEREAS there are currently more than 170,000 inactive (suspended, abandoned or orphaned) oil and gas leases in Alberta and these leases occupy more than 133,000 hectares of land that is not available for other purposes;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to apply distribution and transmission connection timelines and study exemptions that are currently provided to micro-generation projects under Alberta Utility Commission Rule 24 to community generation projects under five Megawatts.

Government Response

Affordability and Utilities

Government of Alberta recognizes that small-scale power generation creates jobs, diversifies our economy, and provides opportunities for increased distributed generation that can preserve agricultural land. Requirements for small-scale generation are set out in the Small Scale Generation Regulation under the *Electric Utilities Act*.

This regulation is intended to enable small scale electricity generation from renewable and alternative sources to supply electric energy to the grid or to an isolated community and provides for the establishment of a default market participant for these projects in order to minimize barriers associated with connecting to the electricity market.

The intent of micro-generation, on the other hand, is to enable behind-the-meter self-supply for Albertans to offset all, or a portion, of their own annual electrical load by generating electricity from renewable or alternative energy sources. The approval and connection obligations in place for small-scale generation projects are the same as those for other distributed generation projects and are intended to ensure the safe and reliable operation of our electricity grid.

Amendments to the Small Scale Generation Regulation to implement enforceable distribution and transmission interconnection timelines and provide study exemptions to projects under five megawatts are not being actively considered at this time. However, the Ministry of Affordability and Utilities is aware of the concerns raised in Resolution 23-22F and will consider this feedback in future reviews of the regulation. Government regularly reviews the policies and regulations governing the electricity sector to ensure their efficiency and effectiveness.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Ministry of Affordability and Utilities recognizes the benefits that small scale power generation brings to communities, through job creation and the preservation of prime agricultural land. The approval processes and procedures currently in place are linked to the safe and reliable use of the electricity grid. However, it is not clear whether the exemptions would create unsafe transmission from a generator project under five megawatts.

As the Ministry is not actively working on auditing the processes and creating a more streamlined approach to small scale generation, the RMA assigns this a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 24-22F

Improved Crop Insurance for Market Gardens

Red Deer County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation**

WHEREAS market gardening is a growing industry producing fresh fruit and vegetables and marketing these crops directly to the consumer; and

WHEREAS market gardens are not able to access cost effective crop insurance to protect their investments; and

WHEREAS the future of market gardens is dependent on stable income;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta for cost effective crop insurance for market gardens.

Government Response

Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation

Agriculture Financial Services (AFSC) strives to provide the agriculture industry with cost-effective insurance products and relies on feedback from producers, industry groups, municipalities and other organizations. A variety of business risk management products and options for market gardens exist and AFSC staff met with individual market garden operators at the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association to discuss products and options. In January 2023, AFSC will continue consulting with market garden operators to seek insight and input on options for a potential cost-shared insurance product.

AGI and AFSC will continue working to understand the risks that market garden operators face and to develop solutions to ensure business risk management programs align with this unique industry.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The ongoing engagement work being undertaken by AFSC is promising. As details on the cost effectiveness are not yet available, RMA is not able to determine if the new policies will be acceptable to market garden operators. Until this information is finalized, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Principle**.

Section 2: Resolution Status Update

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

Resolutions at a Glance

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
AGRICULTURE		
3-22S	Attraction and Retention of Veterinarians to Rural Veterinary Practice	Accepted in Principle
4-21S	Agriculture Service Board Provincial Committee Funding	Accepted
3-20F	Support for Alberta Farmland Trust	Accepted in Principle
8-20F	Enhancing Support for Farmers When a State of Agricultural Disaster is Declared	Intent Not Met
ER1-20S	Loss of 2% Strychnine	Incomplete Information
BROADBAND AND CONNECTIVITY		
9-20F	CRTC Aggregate Wholesale Pricing to Mandate Rural Investment	Accepted in Part
COMMUNITY SERVICES		
19-20F	Reinstatement of the Benefit Contribution Grant for Early Childhood Educators	Intent Not Met
EMERGENCY SERVICES		
7-22S	Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) Report Funding	Accepted
1-21F	Emergency Medical Services Capacity and Service Delivery in Rural Alberta	Accepted
ENERGY		

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
ER1-22S	Alberta Energy Regulator Action to Require Oil and Gas Companies to Pay Municipal Property Taxes	Accepted in Part
7-21F	Awareness Campaign for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)	Intent Not Met
1-21S	Alberta Energy Regulator Directive 006 – Licensee Liability Rating (LLR) Program and License Transfer Process	Accepted
10-20F	Weed Issues on Oil and Gas Sites in Rural Alberta	Intent Not Met
ENVIRONMENT		
2-22S	Negative Impact of Carbon Tax on Rural Albertans	Accepted in Principle
10-21F	Site C Dam – BC Hydro	Intent Not Met
5-21S	Preservation of Water Quality and Access to Water by Albertans	Incomplete Information
12-20F	Expansion of Elk Hunting for Management in Agriculture Production Areas	Intent Not Met
15-20F	Security Deposits for Dispositions	Intent Not Met
1-20S	Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive	Accepted in Part
4-20S	Water and Wastewater – Laws, Regulations and Funding	Intent Not Met
HEALTH AND SENIORS		
5-21F	Seniors’ Foundation Requisitions	Accepted in Part
ER2-20S	New Physician Funding Framework	Accepted
ER3-20S	Housing Management Body Compliance Requirements During Pandemic Response	Accepted in Part
MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE		
2-21F	Disaster Recovery Program Cost Allocations	Intent Not Met
2-20F	Blue-Ribbon Panel to Review Unpaid Taxes Owed by Oil and Gas Companies	Intent Not Met
4-20F	Provincial Policing Costs Levy – Designate as a Requisition	Intent Not Met
17-20F	Rural Small Business Properties Assessment Sub-Classes Amendment	Intent Not Met

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
2-20S	Additional Depreciation of Machinery and Equipment Property (Schedule D)	Intent Not Met
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT		
6-21F	Historical Resources Impact Assessments	Intent Not Met
3-21S	Personal Cannabis Production for Medical Use	Intent Not Met
6-21S	National Flood Insurance Strategy and Community Resiliency Advocacy	Accepted in Part
7-20F	Amendments to <i>Municipal Government Act</i> Section 619	Intent Not Met
13-20F	Provincial Government Disaster Recovery Program Payments	Intent Not Met
16-20F	Federal and Provincial Disaster Support	Intent Not Met
18-20F	Municipal Decision-making on Fire Bans in Hamlets Within Forest Protection Area	Accepted
POLICING AND RURAL CRIME		
4-22S	Continued Support for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Alberta	Intent Not Met
2-21S	<i>Police Act</i> Review	Accepted
1-20F	Police Funding Model Freeze	Intent Not Met
RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
5-20S	Regional Economic Development Alliances Continued Provincial Funding	Intent Not Met
6-20S	Economic State of Crisis	Intent Not Met
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE		
8-22S	Reversing Changes to Aerodrome Standards Implemented by Transport Canada	Intent Not Met
3-21F	Vegetation Management on Alberta Provincial Highways	Intent Not Met
OTHER		
6-22S	Responsiveness of Service Delivery by Quasi-independent Agencies in Alberta	Intent Not Met

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
9-21F	Increasing Knowledge-Sharing Among Regulators of Cannabis Production Facilities	Intent Not Met
ER1-21F	RMA Refusal to Engage in Merger Discussions with Alberta Municipalities (formerly known as AUMA)	Accepted
5-20F	Legislated Notice Requirement	Intent Not Met
6-20F	Government of Alberta Embargoed Committee Work	Intent Not Met

AGRICULTURE

Resolution 3-22S

Attraction and Retention of Veterinarians to Rural Veterinary Practice

Status: Accepted In Principle

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RMA is engaged with UCVM to address the operative clauses in the resolution related to RMA working with UCVM. The goal of this partnership is to address the shortage of rural veterinarians through a collaborative approach, and partnering formally with UCVM as appropriate. As this work is still underway, this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted In Principle**.

Resolution 4-21S

Agriculture Service Board Provincial Committee Funding

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

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

Resolution 3-20F

Support for Alberta Farmland Trust

Status: Accepted in Principle

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

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

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

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

The AAFRED response also indicates a willingness to modify the Alberta Land Trust Grant Program to provide funding for agricultural easements. This work has begun, as the response from Alberta Environment and Parks indicates the Alberta Land Trust Grant Program is available for agricultural land, currently focusing on native rangeland conservation associated with ranching operations. The Alberta Land Trust Grant Program uses an annual granting process. Changes have not been made to the grant to allow for its use for agricultural lands. It should also be noted that although not all types of agricultural land are eligible for support through the Alberta Land Trust Grant Program, the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* does allow for easements to be placed on land for “the protection, conservation and enhancement of agricultural land or land for agricultural purposes.”

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

Resolution 8-20F

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

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

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

The number of agricultural disasters declared varies significantly by year. Although 2022 had a relatively low number of disasters declared, 2021 saw 27 declarations due to widespread drought. Recently, the Government of Alberta and AFSC have announced several new assistance measures, including reducing crop insurance premiums. RMA appreciates these initiatives to support farmers, however, because they are not tied to municipal agricultural disaster declarations, these changes do not address the nature of this resolution.

In early 2023, RMA worked with AFSC to better clarify the roles of municipalities in declaring an agricultural disaster and released an updated Municipal Agricultural Disaster Declaration Guide.

RMA has completed a jurisdictional scan and found that like Alberta, municipal agricultural declarations do not trigger automatic funding or support in other provinces. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to advocate for support for the agricultural sector in response to states of agricultural disaster.

Resolution ER1-20S

Loss of 2% Strychnine

Status: Incomplete Information

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

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

BROADBAND AND CONNECTIVITY

Resolution 9-20F

CRTC Aggregate Wholesale Pricing to Mandate Rural Investment

Status: Accepted In Part

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

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

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

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

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

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Resolution 19-20F

Reinstatement of the Benefit Contribution Grant for Early Childhood Educators

Status: Intent Not Met

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

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response states that the program that this resolution appears to reference is the Northern Living Allowance (NLA) rather than the Benefit Contribution Grant (BCG). Both the NLA and BCG are important tools for ensuring stability for early childhood educators in northern Alberta, and, in the case of the BCG, throughout the province. The Government of Alberta response highlights their recent relief funding in response to COVID-19. While this funding is appreciated, the response indicates that funding will not be restored for the NLA. Additionally, Budget 2023 included a key objective for Alberta Children’s Services to “enhance quality licensed child care through workforce investments that strengthen the recruitment and retention of skilled early childhood educators and support their capacity to deliver quality child care.” Unfortunately no change to the BCG or NLA accompanies this objective. As a result, this resolution is assigned the status of **Intent Not Met**.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Resolution 7-22S

Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) Report Funding

Status: Accepted

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

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

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

Resolution 1-21F

Emergency Medical Services Capacity and Service Delivery in Rural Alberta

Status: Accepted

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

DEVELOPMENTS:

In early 2022, the Government of Alberta established the Alberta EMS Provincial Advisory Committee (AEPAC). AEPAC's mandate was to explore system pressures that may contribute to service pressures, gaps and human resource/workforce challenges. This included focus on ground ambulance, air ambulance and dispatch, policies and procedures related to the delivery of EMS services, and identifying current and emerging issues that impact EMS delivery. RMA was represented on AEPAC by President Paul McLauchlin, who served as chair or vice chair for two sub-committees: EMS dispatch and air ambulance. The AEPAC delivered its final report to the Minister of Health in May 2022. The Minister later accepted all of the 53 recommendations in the report and tasked Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, and related ministries and stakeholders (including municipalities) with implementing them.

In April 2023, Alberta Health Services released the *Emergency Medical Services Operating Plan: April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024*. The operating plan heavily focuses on describing current progress and future plans in relation to implementing system improvements recommended from a variety of sources, including the AEPAC final report.

While the success of implementing the recommendations found in the AEPAC report is not yet known, the report has been approved by the Minister and is shaping the future operating priorities of AHS. This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted** and RMA will continue monitoring implementation progress.

ENERGY

Resolution ER1-22S

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

Status: Accepted in Part

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

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

DEVELOPMENTS:

March 16, 2023, a ministerial order (043/2023) was issued which directs the AER to require oil and gas companies to provide proof of full payment of municipal property taxes prior to issuing a new license to a company or allowing a company to sell or purchase and existing licenses. While the ministerial order should have an impact in reducing the amount of unpaid property taxes, it does not meet the intent of the first operative clause in the resolution, which calls for payment of taxes to be “a condition of operating in Alberta.” Under the new requirements, companies are still permitted to operate regardless of their property tax payment status using their existing assets.

In actioning the ministerial order, Alberta Municipal Affairs is working with rural municipalities to gather tax payment data on specific companies, which will then be shared with the AER. Municipal Affairs has developed a formal process in which municipalities can provide updated information quarterly to ensure the AER actions the ministerial order requirements using the most current data. This information-sharing process fulfills the intent of the second operative clause.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part**. RMA will continue to advocate for payment of taxes to be a condition of operating in Alberta for oil and gas companies.

Resolution 7-21F

Awareness Campaign for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

In March 2022, the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Ontario released their joint strategic plan on SMR deployment. The plan includes a small section on public engagement with a

particular focus on education in Saskatchewan and Alberta due to the lack of existing nuclear facilities in each province. However, the plan does not reference municipalities in any way, either as the targets of engagement or potential promotional partners for SMR technology.

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

Resolution 1-21S

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

Status: Accepted

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

DEVELOPMENTS: In December 2021, the AER released Directive 088: Licensee Life-Cycle Management, which replaces Directive 006: Licensee Liability Rating (LLR) Program and Licensee Transfer Process. Directive 088 includes new tools to manage oil and gas liability which include a holistic assessment of the licensee that considers more than 40 different factors, including those listed in section 4.5 of Directive 067. The AER revised Directive 067 in early 2021 to state that the AER may consider unpaid municipal taxes and surface lease payments when assessing licensee eligibility and will reach out directly to the company for those records.

In March 2023, Ministerial Order 043/2023 was issued by the Minister of Energy directing the AER to not approve new licence applications or licence transfers if a company had property tax arrears. The new requirements include that a company owing more than \$20,000 in arrears must provide evidence of payment or a payment agreement directly from the municipality. If this evidence is not provided, the applicant will be unable to transfer the license to another company. Due to the new requirements and the prevention of transfers if there are unpaid property taxes existing, the RMA has assigned this a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 10-20F

Weed Issues on Oil and Gas Sites in Rural Alberta

Status: Intent Not Met

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

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates Alberta Energy's response outlining the *Weed Control Act* and the responsibilities of the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) and Orphan Well Association (OWA) regarding weed management. However, due to the ongoing challenges oil and gas companies are facing, many have opted to forgo weed control measures on their lease sites on both private and Crown lands. This includes companies whose assets have been assigned to the OWA, companies in receivership or

bankruptcy proceedings and companies that continue to operate. While municipalities have the authority under the *Weed Control Act* to serve and enforce a notice of non-compliance, many go unresolved from not being able to find a contact person or the company refuses to comply.

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

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENT

Resolution 2-22S

Negative Impact of Carbon Tax on Rural Albertans

Status: Accepted in Principle

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: While RMA has not yet received a response from the Government of Canada, RMA has begun work on an economic impact analysis report. At this point, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Principle**, as the impact analysis is underway with a plan to release in June 2023.

Resolution 10-21F

Site C Dam – BC Hydro

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

Alberta Environment and Parks indicated that BC Hydro plans to assess potential cascade impacts in 2022. The results of this study were intended to help inform the creation of Alberta emergency preparedness plan, including an additional inundation study by Alberta, to assess impacts to our province. While Alberta has developed an emergency preparedness plan, it fails to directly account for the risks associated with the BC Hydro Site C project as directed in the resolution.

Though Alberta Environment and Parks are taking steps in the right direction, the GOA has not indicated any plans to share the Government of British Columbia's technical report and all other related information on Site C dam publicly. The RMA assigns this resolution as **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 5-21S

Preservation of Water Quality and Access to Water by Albertans

Status: Incomplete Information

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

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates the Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) response explaining that no comprehensive reply will be given by May 29, 2023 due to the upcoming election. As RMA has not yet received a detailed response regarding this resolution, it is assigned a status of **Incomplete Information**, and will be re-visited when a government response is received.

Resolution 12-20F

Expansion of Elk Hunting for Management in Agriculture Production Areas

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

Resolution 15-20F

Security Deposits for Dispositions

Status: Intent Not Met

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

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates the Government of Alberta response that local municipalities are exempt from providing reclamation security if they are operating under an approval, registration, or code of practice, per s. 17.1 of the Conservation and Reclamation Regulation. However, this resolution is stating that municipalities are being held accountable to pay a security deposit for dispositions on Crown land.

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas have clarified that they will not consider exemptions for municipalities on dispositions for Recreational Miscellaneous Leases, Surface Material Leases, and Miscellaneous Leases. RMA is concerned about this lack of exemption and the fact that security deposits

are determined on a case-by-case basis. This hinders the planning ability of municipalities to know what costs they may incur to take out dispositions.

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

Resolution 1-20S

Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive

Status: Accepted in Part

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

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

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

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

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

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

Resolution 4-20S

Water and Wastewater – Laws, Regulations and Funding

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate that the governments of Canada and Alberta consider and evaluate the financial impacts that all existing and proposed laws and regulations governing the production and distribution of potable water and the collection, treatment and release of wastewater will have on municipalities, municipal commissions, or municipally-owned utility companies, and share this information with RMA; and

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

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

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

RMA participated on Alberta Municipalities' Wastewater Innovation Task Force to share the rural municipal perspective on the following concerns:

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

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

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

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

HEALTH AND SENIORS

Resolution 5-21F

Seniors' Foundation Requisitions

Status: Accepted in Part

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

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

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

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

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response is broken down by their comments on each operative clause. The first clause asks for a review of the Housing Act. The response indicates upcoming consultations on a 10-year plan (which is now complete and has resulted in the publication of a 10-year affordable housing strategy). However, the response does not indicate a willingness to open the *Housing Act* itself for review.

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

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

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

explicit in the regulations. There is a commitment to consider adding this in the next round of regulation amendments.

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

Resolution ER2-20S

New Physician Funding Framework

Status: Accepted

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

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

Resolution ER3-20S

Housing Management Body Compliance Requirements During Pandemic Response

Status: Accepted in Part

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

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

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

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

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

MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

Resolution 2-21F

Disaster Recovery Program Cost Allocations

Status: Intent Not Met

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

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response acknowledges the importance of the Disaster Recovery Program to municipalities in Alberta. Unfortunately, the response does not indicate any consideration in removing or reconsidering the newly implemented 90/10 provincial/municipal DRP cost-share. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and RMA will continue to advocate on this issue.

Resolution 2-20F

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

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response makes no reference to the specific request made in the resolution: that the province appoint an independent panel of experts to review the issue of unpaid municipal property taxes by oil and gas companies. The Government of Alberta recently enacted Ministerial Order 043/2023, through which the Minister of Energy required the Alberta Energy Regulator to refuse new licence and licence transfer applications for companies with property tax arrears. While this action is appreciated by the RMA and should have a positive impact on payment of property taxes, it was not developed by an independent panel of experts, as requested in the resolution.

The Government of Alberta has demonstrated its recent willingness to conduct independent reviews, panels, and inquiries on issues that it deems significant, including the Alberta Health Services review, the COVID-19 response review, the Fair Deal Panel, and the Inquiry into Anti-Alberta Energy Campaigns. Given the province's frequent use of independent reviews, it is disappointing that the Government of Alberta is unwilling to form a panel to better understand the root of the issue and how municipalities, Alberta Municipal Affairs, the Alberta Energy Regulator, and other bodies could play a role in creating such accountability would be an important step in the right direction. While Ministerial Order 043/2023 is a positive step, a broader examination of the causes and impacts of the issue would likely contribute to a more fulsome solution.

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

Resolution 4-20F

Provincial Policing Costs Levy – Designate as a Requisition

Status: Intent Not Met

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

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta’s response that designating the police costing levy as a requisition may create additional red tape is unclear, as the current levy process already requires municipalities to pay the province directly for police services on a regular basis, similar to a requisition process. Any minor administrative challenges would be more than offset by the improved transparency that allowing policing costs to be displayed on property tax notices would provide for municipal taxpayers.

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

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

Resolution 17-20F

Rural Small Business Properties Assessment Sub-Classes Amendment

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

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

Resolution 2-20S

Additional Depreciation of Machinery and Equipment Property (Schedule D)

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

DEVELOPMENTS: In 2020, the Government of Alberta undertook a review of the assessment model for regulated oil and gas properties. The review process included consideration of changes to how Schedule D depreciation is applied to various property types, including a shift away from the use of additional (Schedule D) depreciation in some proposed scenarios.

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

Recently, Canadian Natural Resources Limited (CNRL) launched a mass appeal of the 2018 and 2019 assessment of its machinery and equipment (M&E) properties in 52 rural municipalities based on the argument that the assessment should be reduced under Schedule D depreciation due to general economic circumstances impacting the productivity and profitability of the properties. The Land and Property Rights Tribunal (LPRT) rejected CNRL's complaints related to M&E properties. CNRL then appealed the decision to the Court of King's Bench, but ultimately chose to withdraw the appeal. Although the attempt by CNRL to use schedule D to address broad economic conditions was not successful, it reflects the risks that the broad wording poses for municipalities and other taxpayers.

The Government of Alberta convened a second assessment model review process in spring 2022. The process is expected span multiple years and address all types of regulated property. RMA will continue to use the direction provided in this resolution to support their positioning related to M&E property. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Resolution 6-21F

Historical Resources Impact Assessments

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

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

Resolution 3-21S

Personal Cannabis Production for Medical Use

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

Resolution 6-21S

National Flood Insurance Strategy and Community Resiliency Advocacy

Status: Accepted in Part

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

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

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

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

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

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

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Part**, and RMA will follow up with the Government of Alberta to better understand their priorities in relation to contributing to the implementation of the task force’s recommendations.

Resolution 7-20F

Amendments to *Municipal Government Act* Section 619

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

In April 2023, RMA formed the “RMA Committee on Quasi-Judicial Agencies” (QJAC). QJAC consists of five RMA members volunteers and is chaired by Vulcan County Reeve and RMA District 1 Director Jason Schneider. Over several months, QJAC will engage with RMA members, provincial quasi-judicial agencies such as those listed in resolution 7-20F, and other stakeholders. QJAC will seek local examples of how municipalities and quasi-judicial agencies interact and the impacts that the limited role of municipalities in provincial approval processes has had on local land use planning and municipal autonomy.

RMA is also undertaking a research report examining the concept of “public interest” and the role that Alberta’s quasi-judicial agencies see themselves playing in upholding public interest in relation to the industries that they regulate. Their report will also delve into if, how and to what extent improving municipal participation in provincial approval processes could better represent the public interest.

RMA expects that the committee’s work and the report will be complete in the fall 2023, and provide RMA with compelling evidence, analysis and recommendations to continue to advocate for changes to section 619.

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

Resolution 13-20F

Provincial Government Disaster Recovery Program Payments

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

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

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

Resolution 16-20F

Federal and Provincial Disaster Support

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

Given the major impacts this change may have on municipalities, RMA is disappointed that the change was announced with no consultation or transition period.

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

Resolution 18-20F

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

Status: Accepted

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

DEVELOPMENTS: \ In response to resolution 18-20F, Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation consulted with RMA and impacted members to discuss the possibility of amending legislation to allow municipalities to make decisions on fire bans in hamlets within the Forest Protection Area. However, RMA is concerned that AAFRED also indicated support for municipalities taking on a greater degree of responsibility for fire suppression within these hamlets. As local decision makers, RMA members are well positioned to understand local conditions, placing them in a position to make informed decisions about fire bans within hamlets. However, RMA members are not in a financial position to increase their service levels regarding fire management in hamlets without support from the Government of Alberta.

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

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

POLICING AND RURAL CRIME

Resolution 4-22S

Continued Support for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Alberta

Status: Accepted

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

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

Resolution 2-21S

Police Act Review

Status: Accepted

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

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta (GOA) response highlights *Police Act* engagement sessions that occurred with municipalities throughout 2021. While these sessions did provide opportunities for engagement, the changes made to the *Police Act* in 2022 did not align with RMA's input and are likely to undermine and limit local input into policing in rural and small urban communities. However, as engagement has continued, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted** and will continue to advocate based on the principle of local input.

Resolution 1-20F

Police Funding Model Freeze

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

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

Throughout the PFM consultation process, the Government of Alberta did not provide municipal stakeholders with any information on how the new costing model would be linked to improved local police services. There was no plan, outline or principles to provide stakeholders peace of mind that the cost model was anything other than a download. Following the completion of the consultation, the Government of Alberta announced that the cost model would be used to support 300 new RCMP officers and 200 new civilian administrative staff for the province, but provided no information on how these resources would be deployed or whether municipalities would have any input as to how they would be used to address local rural crime challenges. Currently, the RCMP shares routine updates on staffing increases linked to the PFM. While these updates are appreciated, they continue to have no linkage to any plan or strategy regarding service levels in specific communities.

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

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

The PFM runs for five years and next year (2024) is the final year of the current PFM agreement. The Government of Alberta is likely to engage RMA and other stakeholders on possible changes to the model moving forward. This resolution will serve as a baseline for advocacy efforts.

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

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Resolution 5-20S

Regional Economic Development Alliances Continued Provincial Funding

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

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

Although Alberta is in a much stronger fiscal position than at the time this resolution was endorsed, Alberta Jobs, Economy and Innovation has boosted funding for REDA initiatives for an additional one year. This commitment is a step in the right direction and RMA hopes that the next budget brings longer term funding that aligns with the resolution request.

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

Resolution 6-20S

Economic State of Crisis

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

Alberta Energy's efforts to attract and secure investment with these initiatives, it is too early to determine whether these efforts will attract investment to Alberta. The RMA will continue to monitor these initiatives and update members on their status.

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

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

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

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

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Resolution 8-22S

Reversing Changes to Aerodrome Standards Implemented by Transport Canada

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

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

Resolution 3-21F

Vegetation Management on Alberta Provincial Highways

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

DEVELOPMENTS: Alberta Transportation originally indicated that they will be conducting a program-level review of the vegetation management program to ensure its ongoing effectiveness in fall 2022. The review will include the development of a vegetation management plan framework which will provide a consistent platform for an annual update regarding expected budgets, mowing frequency, herbicide application, innovations, and stakeholder consultation. However, RMA is concerned that this response

does not address the legislative requirement to control weeds. RMA has written to Alberta Transportation expressing this concern, and during a spring 2022 meeting with RMA, the Minister of Transportation confirmed that the review would take place and that it may include a greater focus on controlling legislated weeds. RMA appreciates that the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development will support Alberta Transportation in this work by discussing the impact that weeds and uncontrolled vegetation can have on the safety of rural Albertans and global markets. RMA looks forward to the outcome of this review and will seek opportunities to provide rural municipal perspective.

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

OTHER

Resolution 6-22S

Responsiveness of Service Delivery by Quasi-independent Agencies in Alberta

Status: Intent Not Met

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

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response acknowledges municipal concerns with the role of provincial regulators in making decisions with local impacts without adequately considering local land use plans. RMA and its members generally recognize the fact that the Government of Alberta has a responsibility in considering larger provincial outcomes when approving certain types of development. The issue lies with the lack of recognition for and balance with the municipal role in considering local outcomes. Both are similarly important but, in most cases, only the provincial scope is included within the formal approval process.

RMA has formed a member committee to examine the relationship between quasi-judicial agencies and municipalities in relation to approving provincially-regulated developments. The intent of the committee is to gather municipal examples and perspectives related to the local impacts of provincially-regulated developments, the lack of consideration of municipal plans and perspectives in the approval process, and how this lack of a local lens impacts the ability of quasi-judicial agencies to make decisions in the public interest. RMA also plans to develop a research report with recommendations as to how quasi-judicial agencies can better integrate a municipal lens into decision-making.

RMA appreciates the Minister of Municipal Affairs plan to connect with other Cabinet members to consider the possibility of a review of provincial approval bodies. However, until more information on this review becomes available, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 9-21F

Increasing Knowledge-Sharing Among Regulators of Cannabis Production Facilities

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

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

Based on conversations with Health Canada, RMA has clarified that there are requirements for licensees to notify municipalities when a license is obtained, however there is no mandate enforcing this requirement. RMA remains unsure on how Health Canada ensures requirements are met, however the RMA will continue to advocate to ensure municipalities are informed on the licenses approved in their area. RMA has informed Health Canada that some mechanism or framework needs to be established to communicate directly with municipalities, as they are directly impacted by operations. Further, RMA

was made aware that inspector reports are available on the Health Canada website, however there is significant delay between the time of the investigation and the release of the report. RMA is advocating for an interim report to be sent directly to affected municipalities to ensure public safety, should these gaps not be resolved. Although these clarifications do not meet the intent of the resolution, Health Canada has acknowledged the challenges municipalities are experiencing and RMA will continue to advocate to have them properly addressed.

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

Resolution ER1-21F

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

Status: Accepted

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

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

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

Resolution 5-20F

Legislated Notice Requirement

Status: Intent Not Met

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

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

The example of effective consultation provided in the Government of Alberta's response (changes to the planning and development provisions in the MGA) was actually quite challenging for RMA, as limited time was provided for participating associations to reach out to members, and specific proposed changes based on the request of the development industry (most of which would have the impact of reducing or narrowing municipal land use planning powers) formed the basis of the consultation. Similar challenges characterized the recent assessment model review, as municipal participants had no choice but to push back against four different proposed changes to how oil and gas wells were assessed, all of

which would have reduced municipal revenues to various extents. Despite the massive implications that the changes being considered would have had on rural and small urban municipalities, RMA and AUMA were not permitted to inform their members of the changes being considered or solicit member input until the review was concluded.

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

Resolution 6-20F

Government of Alberta Embargoed Committee Work

Status: Intent Not Met

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

DEVELOPMENTS: The Government of Alberta response indicates that the province does not currently have a formal process for determining when an embargoed process is required and have no plans to do so. As RMA members are concerned with the current arbitrary nature of when consultations are embargoed, and the lack of ability for organizations such as RMA to engage their members on issues that have been embargoed, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met** and RMA will continue to emphasize the need for member updates and engagement in future embargoed consultation processes.

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

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Acknowledgements also to RMA staff who worked to produce this report:

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- ◆ Tasha Blumenthal, Director of External Relations and Advocacy
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