



RMA
RURAL MUNICIPALITIES
of ALBERTA

2023 Resolution Status Update

Volume 2

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Introduction

The Resolution Status Update is divided into two sections.

- ♦ **Section 1** provides detailed information on the government response to the spring 2023 resolutions and includes the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) Board of Directors' reaction to the response as well as anticipated follow up.
- ♦ **Section 2** updates members by reporting on all active resolutions, grouped by advocacy area.

Definition of Terms

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

Below are the descriptions of all resolution ranking statuses.

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

Section 1: Government Responses to Spring 2023 Resolutions

RMA recently received responses to the resolutions adopted at the spring 2023 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
1-23S	Enhanced Support for Receiving Municipalities in Dissolutions	Intent Not Met
2-23S	Provincial Funding Stream for Non-Residential Infrastructure	Intent Not Met
3-23S	Amendments to the National Building Code	Accepted in Part
4-23S	Strategic Direction for the RMA	Accepted
5-23S	Access to Mobile Wireless (Cellular) Services	Intent Not Met
6-23S	Rural Access to Supports for Addictions, Homelessness and Mental Health	Intent Not Met
7-23S	Revision of the <i>Alberta Land Stewardship Act</i> to provide for an Expiration Date in Conservation Easement Agreements	Incomplete Information
8-23S	Provincial Review of Agribusiness and Agritourism	Accepted in Principle
9-23S	Rural Fixed Wing Medivac Services	Intent Not Met
10-23S	Victim Services Delivery Model	Intent Not Met
11-23S	Reforming the Bail System to Address Rural Crime	Intent Not Met
12-23S	Casino Opportunities for Charitable Organizations	Intent Not Met
13-23S	Municipal Access to Open Data	Accepted in Principle
14-23S	Hydrogen Industry Support	Intent Not Met
15-23S	Capital Funding Support for Housing Management Bodies	Intent Not Met
16-23S	Applied Research Associations Funding	Accepted
17-23S	Negative Impact of Bill C-21 on Albertans	Intent Not Met
19-23S	Non-Profit Exemption from Federal Fuel Charge	Incomplete Information

Resolution 1-23S

Enhanced Support for Receiving Municipalities in Dissolutions

Parkland County

Carried as amended

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

Alberta municipalities have experienced relative stability and few significant changes to structure and historic boundaries over the past 35 years, with most changes occurring incrementally and typically in response to emerging local and regional needs. Thirteen dissolutions have occurred since 2015, which represents less than four per cent of the municipal sector. Municipal Affairs has traditionally not taken a position on local restructuring discussions in order to remain impartial and not give the impression that the province is attempting to influence a specific outcome.

The province recognizes that the capacity of local governments is challenged by many competing requirements and expectations, including providing core municipal services; complying with legislative and regulatory requirements; addressing increasing citizen expectations of services; and managing and adapting to change as a result of global or local economic shifts, provincial fiscal policy, and legislative and regulatory regime adjustments. Despite these pressures, most municipalities in Alberta continue to be financially viable.

Municipalities continue to be in the best position to explore options to achieve efficiencies and address local challenges. Following feedback from municipalities on funding for the municipal restructuring component of the Alberta Community Partnership (ACP) program and how it created a financial disparity between the dissolution

process (or viability review) and the amalgamation process, Municipal Affairs adjusted the funding formula in 2019/20 to reflect improved funding equity between the dissolution and amalgamation processes.

For 2023/24, the ACP program budget is \$15.4 million to support municipalities. Eligible projects under the municipal restructuring component of the program include regional governance/amalgamation studies, infrastructure studies as part of viability reviews, and post-restructuring funding for transitional costs and infrastructure/debt servicing in the restructured municipality. The maximum amounts available to receiving municipalities in dissolutions strive to equitably allocate available funding.

Additionally, in 2021 and 2022, the ministry engaged KPMG to independently evaluate the current viability review process by conducting a participant survey for residents and municipal officials who previously participated in a viability review. Ministry staff reviewed the results of the evaluation and have leveraged the information to develop new approaches and tools to improve the program, including the development of a suite of post-review supports following amalgamation or dissolution that will be implemented in current and future viability review processes.

Municipal Affairs continues to respect the autonomy of the potential receiving municipality and will remain responsive to the level of support desired by that municipality and the chief administrative officer. One of the available supports includes the ability for the Minister to appoint an official administrator, as was recently done for the former towns of Black Diamond and Turner Valley. Whether this tool could be used more frequently going forward to supervise a municipality transitioning through a restructuring change could be considered. The ministry continues to welcome the input of the associations through the Municipal Sustainability Strategy Advisory Committee on how the role of official administrator, as a supervisor, may be used as part of the available suite of post-restructuring supports.

In recent years, there has been an increase in interest from municipalities wishing to explore restructuring options jointly and voluntarily. To recognize these shifts in municipal interest towards more municipally led restructuring processes, and to continue supporting the long-term sustainability of both urban and rural municipalities, the province remains open to dialogue with municipalities and their associations regarding ongoing improvements towards the viability review process, and about how best to prioritize available provincial funds that support restructuring.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response emphasizes the importance of supporting the autonomy of municipalities that receive a dissolved municipal neighbour. While autonomy is a crucial aspect of effective municipal operations, Alberta's dissolution process requires rural municipalities to absorb a dissolving municipality regardless of their own capacity to do so and with no say in the decisions and actions that contributed to the dissolution. This often results in the absorbing municipality incurring large costs linked to infrastructure upgrades and service level enhancements, resulting in delays of previously planned projects or initiatives.

For rural municipalities tasked with absorbing a dissolved neighbour, improved provincial data collection of their actual absorption costs, and subsequent financial support that aligns with those costs, would significantly enhance municipal autonomy, as it would allow the absorbing municipality to improve conditions in the dissolved area, and integrate it into plans, budgets, and service delivery approaches, without penalizing existing rural residents and businesses by delaying, cancelling, or re-scaling planned projects or existing services. Improvements to the pre-dissolution process to improve communication between the dissolving and absorbing municipality, and prevent the dissolving municipality from making significant or high-risk financial decisions would also better protect the absorbing municipality from risk.

While the Government of Alberta response references the recent KPMG report on the existing dissolution process and subsequent plans to provide new post-dissolution supports, the report results and any planned changes to the process have not been publicly shared, despite a request from RMA.

RMA is currently developing a post-dissolution impacts study based on an examination of five recent dissolutions. While the full study has not yet been released, the recommendations are finalized. The recommendations are as follows:

Financial Support

- ◆ Recommendation 1: That Municipal Affairs to increase the ACP Infrastructure funding available to absorbing municipalities, with a formula that considers the cost identified in the infrastructure audit and emergency repairs.
- ◆ Recommendation 2: That Municipal Affairs to reinstate ACP Transitional funding to previous levels.
- ◆ Recommendation 3: That Municipal Affairs to provide expanded ACP Transitional funding for an optional dedicated administrative project resource.
- ◆ Recommendation 4: That Municipal Affairs to provide new funding for emergent issues discovered during post-dissolution.
- ◆ Recommendation 5: That Municipal Affairs to explore a 'tiered' funding model, with additional funding supports available to municipalities absorbing large, complex dissolutions.

Viability Review and Pre-Dissolution Process

- ◆ Recommendation 6: That Municipal Affairs to provide strict guidelines for Infrastructure Audits to ensure comprehensiveness and to incorporate the absorbing municipality's infrastructure standards.
- ◆ Recommendation 7: That Municipal Affairs to implement an Official Administrator (Supervisory only) for municipalities that have approved dissolution votes.
- ◆ Recommendation 8: That Municipal Affairs to implement formal participation and code of conduct requirements for municipalities participating in viability reviews.
- ◆ Recommendation 9: That Municipal Affairs to revise the existing workbooks to better enable absorbing municipalities to project potential impacts to them.

Post-Dissolution Process

- ◆ Recommendation 10: That RMA work with Municipal Affairs to implement a guidebook and resource directory for absorbing municipalities to inform them, and provide dedicated staffing resource supports for questions and emergent issues.
- ◆ Recommendation 11: That RMA develop specific resource materials, communities of practice and other supports for absorbing municipalities to support members dealing with dissolution related issues.
- ◆ Recommendation 12: That Municipal Affairs implement a sustainability monitoring and supports program for RMA members deemed 'at-risk' of dissolution related sustainability issues.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to advocate on this issue based on the recommendations listed above.

Resolution 2-23S

Provincial Funding Stream for Non-Residential Infrastructure

Wheatland County

Carried

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

The Government of Alberta understands that municipal infrastructure is critical to meeting municipal needs, including industrial economic development as well as supporting Alberta's broader economy. This is why the government has fulfilled its commitment to providing predictable, long-term infrastructure funding for all municipalities through the Local Government Fiscal Framework Act, which establishes a new funding mechanism for municipalities beginning in 2024/25. The Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF) program will provide \$722 million in capital funding in its first year. As a result of an amendment to the Act that was passed in the spring 2023 legislative session, this amount will now increase or decrease at the same percentage change as provincial revenues.

Municipal Affairs has engaged with local governments and local government associations to gather input regarding the LGFF program design and allocation formula (for communities other than Calgary and Edmonton). This engagement provided the opportunity for all local governments to share input into how funding should be allocated and how the program should be administered. As the final allocation formula is determined, careful consideration will be given to a variety of factors that indicate local needs and capacity, in recognition of the different circumstances and opportunities faced by different types of municipalities. The LGFF allocation formula and program design will be announced later this year.

In addition, in 2023/24, local governments will receive \$266 million under the Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF), which is \$11 million more than what they received the previous year. This funding can be used to invest in priority local infrastructure projects.

Both the CCBF and the LGFF offer local governments flexibility in allocating funding to address local priorities and make long-term investments in critical infrastructure. Rural municipalities can use both programs to allocate funding towards critical infrastructure to support the creation of new economic development opportunities in rural communities.

Given the flexibility and opportunities in the funding programs outlined above, and the room available to most rural municipalities in Alberta within regulated debt limits, as well as the option of requesting a debt limit extension (subject to specific requirements), the government is not considering a new funding stream for non-residential capital infrastructure at this time.

Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors

Transportation and Economic Corridors (TEC) provides funding to eligible municipalities, either individually or as groups of two or more, for the construction of municipal facilities for water supply and treatment through the Alberta Municipal Water/Wastewater Partnership and Water for Life programs. As noted by the RMA, the programs do not support industrial development projects, industry expansion, or country residential projects.

TEC has been mandated by the Premier to lead an initiative, in consultation with the Alberta Ministries of Municipal Affairs, Indigenous Relations, Environment and Protected Areas, Agriculture and Irrigation, and Treasury Board and Finance, to develop an integrated water program to facilitate water treatment and distribution for residential, industrial, and agricultural water usage across Alberta. TEC will begin consultation on the development of this initiative over the coming months.

TEC's Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program (STIP) provides financial assistance to rural and smaller urban municipalities for developing and maintaining key transportation infrastructure. STIP funding is divided into four streams: Local Road Bridges, Community Airport Program (CAP), Resource Road Program (RRP), and Local Municipal Initiative. All four streams allow projects that support industry. Both the CAP and the RRP streams encourage municipalities to partner with industry to request funding.

Alberta Infrastructure

On November 15, 2023, the Premier released mandate letters to all ministers. Work is underway to deliver on Infrastructure's mandate to work with the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors, and the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to propose a formula that provides guidance on the amount of capital funding that should be budgeted each year to ensure greater predictability for our construction industry partners.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA members are unique in Alberta and across Canada due to their large size and responsibility for providing municipal infrastructure and services to isolated areas of the province with limited populations but extremely high levels of industrial activity. In other provinces and territories, rural and remote areas typically have a much less active industrial base and the province plays a direct role in providing traditionally local services and infrastructure. For this reason, much of the infrastructure built and managed by Alberta's rural municipalities provides limited benefits to residents, but is hugely important to industries such as oil and gas, forestry, agriculture and renewable energy.

The Government of Alberta's response is disappointing, as it fails to recognize this unique and valuable rural municipal responsibility. RMA members have shared multiple examples of major infrastructure projects designed to attract new industrial development or to service expanding existing development, including water lines, stormwater management upgrades, road and intersection improvements, and even the creation of entire industrial parks, including all utilities, transportation access, etc. While such investments certainly provide local benefits in the form of property tax revenues, the contribution to the province more broadly, as well as neighbouring urban municipalities, is often much greater in the form of income tax revenue, job creation, increased demand for urban residential and commercial development, etc.

While some of the existing programs referenced in the Government of Alberta response could potentially be used to support rural industry-specific projects, many cannot, and those that can typically weigh population or benefit to residents heavily in determining allocation. While RMA certainly does not suggest that the Government of Alberta not support municipal projects that support residents, the massive grant funding gap in supporting industry-linked projects not only reflects a lack of understanding of the unique role that Alberta's rural municipalities play in this area, but also undermines further economic growth in the province by not providing rural municipalities with the grant support they require to meet emerging and evolving industry needs.

RMA is hopeful that this issue will be addressed in future budgets through a combination of enhanced road and bridge funding and an expansion of the eligibility criteria for provincial water/wastewater grants to include water infrastructure specifically supporting industrial developments.

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

Resolution 3-23S

Amendments to the National Building Code

Mackenzie County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to ensure that the proposed changes to incorporate greenhouse gas emissions reduction into the

National Building Code consider the negative effects to all Albertans, specifically rural Albertans and their quality of life; and

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

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

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

The Government of Alberta recognizes the importance of affordability, while also supporting energy efficient building construction in Alberta. The province is updating its construction codes based on the 2020 NBC, National Fire Code, and National Energy Code for Buildings, which were published by the National Research Council in March 2022. Municipal Affairs, in collaboration with the Safety Codes Council and relevant groups, reviews the new codes to ensure alignment with provincial policy and Alberta's needs, as well as interprovincial trade objectives and to support labour mobility.

Groups that provide input to each new addition of the safety codes include:

- the RMA;
- Alberta Municipalities;
- representatives from both rural and urban municipalities;
- the Building Industry and Land Development Association Alberta;
- Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta;
- Building Owners and Managers Association;
- technical experts across Alberta, including experts in energy efficiency; and
- Safety Codes Officers.

All provinces and territories have signed the Construction Codes Reconciliation Agreement, which commits to reducing or eliminating provincial variations in construction codes. Alberta and other provinces and territories have constitutional authority for codes and standards and there is recognition that jurisdictions may have circumstances in which there is a policy imperative to vary from the national codes. Alberta, along with all other provinces, retains the authority to make variations to national codes based on provincial policy priorities or interests, such as public security and safety, protection of the environment, consumer protection, and other policy priorities.

Alberta recently exercised this authority in the decision to adopt Tier 1 as the minimum provincewide standard for building energy efficiency for housing and small buildings under Part 9 of the Alberta edition of the NBC as well as Tier 1 for energy efficiency for other buildings in the National Energy Code for Buildings. The five new energy efficiency tiers in the national codes provide incremental progression toward net-zero energy efficiency. The predetermined tiers are designed to provide a flexible framework and choice on the performance level and cost most appropriate for provinces and territories to increase energy efficiency. For energy efficiency tiers, stakeholders communicated a strong consensus that Tier 1 was the preferred approach for Alberta.

The next Alberta edition of the building, fire, and energy efficiency codes will come into force in spring 2024. Municipal Affairs recognizes that municipalities require flexibility to appropriately manage the transition period for the administration of new code requirements. Municipal Affairs will provide additional notifications and information on the exact date, along with other information related to the updated codes over the coming months, to ensure municipalities and code users are prepared in advance of the coming into force date. The new Alberta editions of the national building and fire codes will be published in fall 2023.

Municipal Affairs also recognizes that the RMA is an important voice in the code review with other municipal, industry, safety, and agricultural sector representatives to ensure that updates to Alberta's editions of the national building, fire, and energy codes enhance public safety, while supporting housing affordability and fostering economic growth.

Alberta is a member, along with other provinces and territories, of the Canadian Board for Harmonized Construction Codes that makes recommendations to the Provincial/Territorial/ Federal Deputy Minister Table for Canadian Codes on the policy direction of the national codes. As a member of the codes board, Alberta is consulted on all proposals and developments for the national codes and works and consults with the Safety Codes Council and municipal, industry, and other representatives on all code development.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates the province's efforts to support a consistent nationwide approach to building codes with a willingness to diverge from national consensus to adopt requirements that meet the needs of Albertans. While this is appreciated, the resolution request Alberta not to adopt net-zero emissions code requirements into building codes, whereas Alberta has adopted Tier 1 requirements.

Because the Government of Alberta has participated in national building code engagements (as requested in the second operative clause of the resolution), this resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted in Part**, and RMA will continue to advocate for more flexibility in building codes related to net zero requirements.

Resolution 4-23S

Strategic Direction for the RMA

Rural Municipalities of Alberta

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: N/A**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

RMA has adopted its Strategic Direction as presented at the Spring 2023 convention and will next review the Strategic Direction in 2027.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**.

Resolution 5-23S

Access to Mobile Wireless (Cellular) Services

County of Barrhead

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Not yet received.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA continues to request a response from the Government of Canada regarding this resolution. RMA staff has met with members of the CRTC team on this issue, and the CRTC has made it clear that they are aware of the issues that members have brought forward and are currently working on a path forward. The RMA continues to engage with the CRTC to ensure that a rural voice is at the table.

In spring 2023, the Auditor General of Canada released a report reviewing the effectiveness of the federal connectivity strategy and whether results for rural broadband and cellular connectivity were meeting expectations. The report noted that while the federal government’s 2019 connectivity strategy included a commitment by government to improve access to mobile wireless service along highways and major roads, the strategy included no targets or timelines related to mobile cellular connectivity. As a result of this finding, the Auditor General has recommended that Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED) Canada “establish a quantitative and time-bound mobile cellular connectivity target.” In its response to the recommendation, ISED has stated that Canada will exceed 98% cellular coverage by 2026, and that they will improve their monitoring of development for the remaining unserved areas. The ISED response does not clarify whether the 98% figure refers to households or includes major highways and roadways in rural areas.

As the Government of Canada has not provided RMA with any details on how they plan to move forward to address gaps in cellular service coverage, RMA assigns this a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 6-23S

Rural Access to Supports for Addiction, Homelessness and Mental Health

Northern Sunrise County

Carried

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Alberta Mental Health and Addiction

The Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction is focused on supporting Albertans' overall wellness and establishing a recovery-oriented provincial approach to address mental health and addiction issues, which provides access to a continuum of services and supports that incorporates prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery.

There are a number of mental health and addiction supports available to all Albertans, including those in rural areas. This includes Alberta 211, which provides information, referrals and crisis support via telephone, text, chat and website, including mental health and addiction referrals and resources.

The Virtual Opioid Dependency Program (VODP), a service which connects individuals to opioid agonist treatment and other supports via videoconferencing with a physician, is also available across the province, particularly for those in rural areas. The VODP also has a specific Transition Team, which includes a focus on supporting those leaving provincial correctional facilities, such as the Peace River Correctional Centre.

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Rural Distress Line (1-800-232-7288) provides a 24-hour crisis intervention service, which is available to support rural populations. Provincial funding is also provided to CMHA to improve community-led mental health supports in rural areas through the Rural Mental Health Project. Through this project, 150 rural communities across Alberta are implementing local action plans to improve addiction and mental health services.

Alberta's government is also funding Counselling Alberta to provide virtual mental health counselling services across Alberta, including rural communities. Counselling Alberta also partners with local organizations across the province to provide affordable in-person mental health counselling options.

For links to other addiction and mental health programs, services, resources and tools, you can also visit the Alberta Health Services Addiction and Mental Health Information for Albertans webpage. The Government of Alberta Addiction and Mental Health webpage also provides additional information on addiction and mental health services in Alberta.

Regarding homelessness, addressing it is a shared responsibility requiring a co-ordinated approach between all levels of government and multiple sectors including primary health, mental health and addiction, justice and income support, businesses and neighbourhoods.

Released in October 2022, the Government of Alberta's Action Plan on Homelessness included an additional \$9 million to support 24-7 operations in shelters. It also included \$9 million for additional winter shelter spaces in communities where there is urgent need. Of this funding, \$3 million was allocated to support rural communities to offer temporary shelter spaces for the winter months.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta's (GOA's) response to this resolution focuses on various existing mental health supports available for Albertans, including those living in rural areas. However, the response does not indicate that the GOA will take any additional efforts to ensure that rural Alberta has the same access to funding for mental health, addiction, and homelessness that was provided to cities such as Edmonton and Calgary in 2022.

RMA will continue to advocate for more support within rural Alberta and community service organizations that work tirelessly to assist residents struggling with mental health, addictions, and homelessness. Given that the resolution has not been addressed or actioned, RMA assigns this resolution the status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 7-23S

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

County of Newell

Carried

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas

In order to provide you with a considered, comprehensive response, several department divisions are reviewing your correspondence and the resolution. As the provincial election is approaching, I regret that circumstances do not allow me to send a reply before the requested deadline of May 29, 2023. Please expect a full response after the next cabinet is sworn in.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

Since the Government of Alberta is unable to review the *Land Stewardship Act* at this time, this resolution is assigned a status of **Incomplete Information**. RMA will update the resolution status when a response is received.

RMA has engaged with members and stakeholders from various sectors on this issue, including several land stewardship organizations concerned about the impacts that placing an expiration date on easements may have on the protection of land. RMA is hopeful that there will be an opportunity to discuss the resolution request in more detail with government and relevant stakeholders to discuss the benefits and risks of an expiration date,

as well as other possible approaches to balancing land preservation with the reality of changing land uses and land values.

Resolution 8-23S

Provincial Review of Agribusiness and Agritourism

Sturgeon County

Carried

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Alberta Municipal Affairs

The Government of Alberta recognizes the critical role of rural municipalities in promoting local agriculture and agritourism to support economic diversification. The Municipal Government Act (MGA) grants municipalities authority to control the use and development of land through local plans to promote, incentivize, and prioritize local agricultural operations, and respects municipal autonomy in those matters.

Municipal Affairs is supportive of working with Agriculture and Irrigation, and Jobs, Economy and Trade, among others, to consider identifying opportunities for alignment in the prioritization of agribusiness and agritourism with local governments as well as to explore how best to promote these sectors in Alberta municipalities.

The Government of Alberta recognizes the value in expanding upon existing businesses, such as farms, to create further economic opportunities. Municipalities may offer property tax incentives, as enabled by the MGA, to encourage economic development and reduce the burden of starting a new business.

A farm building, which is a building other than a residence that is used for farming operations, is exempt from assessment and taxation. If the development of agribusiness changes the use of the farm building such that it is no longer used for farming operations, then the building would become assessable and taxable at market value.

This type of change often occurs on farm property where a farm building is converted into a commercial or retail operation. However, a municipality may choose to use Section 364.2 of the MGA to defer, reduce, or cancel taxes for a multi-year period to incent development of such businesses.

Farm buildings are also exempt from the requirements of the building code. This exemption means that building, fire, and safety requirements may not be required to be incorporated within the building construction and design. The exemption is based on the limited use of the building as described for farm buildings, limited occupancy by persons, and only for farm personnel authorized to be in the building. Safety of Albertans and building occupants remains top of mind and is the objective of the building code.

If the owners of farm buildings wish to create a value-add agritourism/agribusiness element to their existing operations using the farm building, the farm building may no longer fall within the classification as a ‘farm building’ and would be subject to the building code. Changing the use and/or occupancy by the public for a farm building, without complying to the building code, could present an unsafe condition related to occupant safety.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Alberta Municipal Affairs response indicates a willingness to work with RMA, rural municipalities, and other stakeholders to identify opportunities to enhance the province’s agribusiness and agritourism sectors. The response also outlines several existing municipal tools and assessment/tax policies intended to support the agriculture sector.

Based on the Municipal Affairs response, RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Principle**. However, it is important to note that RMA is still waiting on response from other ministries, that may impact this status, particularly Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation.

Resolution 9-23S

Rural Fixed Wing Medivac Services

MD of Spirit River

Carried

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Alberta Health

Although RMA has not received a formal response to this resolution from the Government of Alberta at this point, developments on this issue are an update.

On April 14, 2023, Alberta Health issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to engage a consultant to analyze Alberta aircraft landing sites that are either in use now or have been used recently by the provincial air ambulance program. The RFP closed on May 8, 2023 and the successful bid will be selected in early June 2023.

The selected consultant will work with municipalities, aviation providers, emergency medical services (EMS) providers, ambulance operators, and other stakeholders to perform a detailed inventory assessment. This project will also include a review of winter operation considerations, a cost-benefit analysis of infrastructure upgrades, guidelines and protocols for airplane and helicopter landing sites, and clear guidance to municipalities responsible for maintaining the landing sites.

The RFP outlines the need for proponents that have a high-level of understanding to situations similar to Alberta aircraft landing sites, including:

- Experience reviewing large air ambulance systems;
- Experience working on projects requiring complex work groups, facilitation and the ability to present, engage and solicit input from a diverse group of stakeholders;
- Experience conducting large EMS system reviews, with a particular focus on air ambulance within a health system composed of municipal and private partners; and
- Experience applying standards and best practice in respect to airport and heliport planning or system improvements.

The evaluation is expected to be completed by January 15, 2024, but these timelines may change upon confirmation of the contract with the chosen proponent. The budget for this project is expected to be no more than \$1.7 million.

The successful proponent is required to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) upon starting the project. All findings from this project will remain confidential until the final report is released to the public in early 2024.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

Depending on its outcomes, the air ambulance landing site review may represent a step in the right direction for affected airports to understand their gaps in services and what is needed to ensure they can safely operate as air ambulance landing sites. The RMA was listed as a key stakeholder in this consultation process and staff completed a joint submission on this issue with ABmunis that reiterated the need for all consultation to include impacted members. The submission includes the following key concerns:

- ♦ Efficient access to health services is essential to the health and safety of citizens and should be at the forefront of any decisions made.
- ♦ Any changes to airport standards, air ambulance service delivery, or other areas identified in the report should not proceed without municipal stakeholder engagement.
- ♦ Financial support is necessary for the maintenance and upgrades of airports being used for air ambulance services.
- ♦ Pilots must be adequately trained at an identified municipal airport to ensure capability and safety.

It is important to note that the review may also pose a risk to small municipalities if outcomes include recommendations for airport standards that small municipalities may be unable to meet, particularly without targeted funding support from the Government of Alberta.

The RFP does not make up for the closure of air ambulance landing sites without consultation and does not restore services and adhere AHS to their existing contracts. There needs to be adequate training of contracted pilots working in these rural areas and the RFP does not account for this.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**. RMA will continue to advocate for the complete restoration of air ambulance services.

Resolution 10-23S

Victim Services Delivery Model

Northern Sunrise County

Carried

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to maintain the current model of victim services program delivery and instead provide direct assistance

to the small number of communities that are struggling to operate under the current model and have insufficient services for victims; and

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

Government Response

Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services

The current model of victim services has been providing varying degrees of assistance to Albertan's for more than 30 years. It began as a grassroots movement of localized volunteers passionate about helping others within their own communities and, over the course of three decades, has evolved into an often but not always reliable means of ensuring victims of crime and tragedy are able to access the supports they deserve – at times of extreme crisis and, where necessary, through complex criminal justice system processes.

We recognize however, that the current system has never been the beneficiary of an articulable strategic design or an equitable, consistent, and sustainable governance structure. As such, and despite the good will and intentions of its participants, it has intermittently but repeatedly shown itself to suffer from a lack of uniformity and stability across the province.

The MLA-led Victims of Crime Review conducted in 2020/21 identified specific gaps in the services and supports available for victims of crime within the current model, and stakeholder input at the time indicated that any new service delivery model for police-based victim services units should:

- encourage consistency in services;
- reduce administrative and service duplication;
- include sustainable paid staffing;
- reduce over-reliance on volunteer advocates;
- include longer-term funding arrangements to provide greater operational stability; and
- address the reluctance of some victim-serving organizations to collaborate.

I would like to reassure you that the move to a regional governance model for police-based victim services units has always been intended to improve the availability of services received by victims of crime across all municipal, rural, and remote regions of the province. It is also designed to ensure that all victims will continue to be supported locally by dedicated workers and volunteers from within their own communities. Although board governance is moving toward integration, all front-line services will remain local.

These changes to victim services in Alberta are an exciting step forward to ensure victims in our province have the help they need when they need it most. Over the next year, we will continue to work closely with municipalities and Indigenous communities to design and implement the new service delivery model.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The resolution calls for continued funding and support for victim services across the province using the current local service delivery model. The current model allows for local victim services units (VSUs) to address community needs on a case-by-case basis in a way that reflects the local community. The resolution emphasizes the importance of the local nature of VSU delivery under the current model and expresses concerns that a regionalized model may not meet the needs of victims in rural areas. Unfortunately, the Government of Alberta response does

not provide any meaningful data or evidence related to why a shift to a regional model is required and what specific deficiencies in the current model justify such a significant change.

In an effort to better understand the implications of transitioning away from the current model of victim services delivery, RMA undertook an internal research project to give members a greater understanding of the effects that this transition will have, especially on rural VSUs. In 2023, RMA released an issue backgrounder on the transition focusing on the following questions and concerns:

- That a standardized regional approach to victim services delivery will replace the flexibility and local focus of the existing model.
- That the GOA plans to provide increased funding for the new model rather than sufficiently fund the current model.
- That the GOA is moving ahead with this decision without providing any public analysis or data explaining how the current model does not meet service delivery outcomes.
- That the disconnection of victim services from local police detachments under a regional model will risk timely access to the service for victims.

During discussions with RMA, Alberta Justice and Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services staff have indicated that the new regional model has already secured provincial funding that will be at a level that is, at minimum, equivalent to the total current provincial funding received by individual VSUs plus all additional revenues generated through local fundraising. If this is the case, it is unclear why the province cannot simply fund local VSUs at a higher level and allow local fundraising to continue to supplement provincial funding. This would likely allow struggling VSUs to add necessary governance and operational capacity, as requested in the resolution.

In discussions with RMA, executive members of Alberta Police Based Victim Services Association (APBVSA), have made their concerns with a zonal model for victim services clear. This new regional model cannot support the unique needs of unique communities and will provide inadequate assistance for victims of crime when needed most. Further, RMA is concerned that some members of Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services have shared misleading information about the state of local VSUs and the volunteer, staff, and executive members that support those VSUs. This has been used to foster public support for the transition to a zonal model and does not reflect the actual state of healthy local VSUs.

This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, and RMA will continue to advocate for the continuation of the local VSU model.

Resolution 11-23S

Reforming the Bail System to Address Rural Crime

Brazeau County

Carried

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Alberta Justice

With respect to the recommendation to amend the bail ladder system, it is important to note that the legal parameters for bail are set out in the Criminal Code. As only the federal government can make or amend criminal law, the Government of Alberta must work within this existing federal legislative framework. I appreciate the other recommendations provided within the resolution, and my department will keep these under consideration as future initiatives are developed.

Alberta recognizes that the current situation is not ideal and can only do so much without greater reform. That is why we fully support the need for potential Criminal Code amendments to enhance the bail regime to ensure that violent, prolific, and repeat offenders are not released back into the community.

On January 13, 2023, a letter signed by provincial premiers, including the Honourable Danielle Smith, was sent to the prime minister urging the federal government to take immediate action to strengthen the Canadian bail system. On March 10, 2023, I attended a meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for justice and public safety to discuss bail reform. In that meeting, the federal government has committed to targeted reforms making it more difficult for some offenders to be released on bail while they await trial.

Feedback received from stakeholders and the public is always welcome and plays an important role in future development of any initiatives. Alberta will continue to advocate for potential Criminal Code reform with federal, provincial, and territorial partners, and I encourage the Rural Municipalities of Alberta to share their views on bail reform with the Honourable David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, at mcu@iustice.gc.ca.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response only accounts for amendments to the Criminal Code and cooperation with the Government of Canada. It is clear that the Government of Alberta is advocating for amendments to the bail system from the Government of Canada. On the issue of federal bail reform, in March 2023, RMA co-signed a letter with other western Canadian municipal associations calling on the Government of Canada to reform the federal bail system to better address risks associated with repeat offenders.

RMA staff followed up with Alberta Justice to learn more about the status of bail system reform in Alberta. A letter was received on November 16, 2023 that outlines the complexities of the bail system and the role that the Government of Canada plays pursuant to the *Criminal Code*. Premier Danielle Smith, among many other premiers across the country, have signed a letter advocating for changes to the bail system. Alberta Justice continues to work with and advocate to the government for changes to the current bail system.

While not directly requested in the resolution, the Government of Alberta has made changes to the Alberta Crown Prosecution Service Bail Practice Protocol to provide guidance to Crown prosecutors to seek to detain any accused who is a threat to public safety, especially repeat violent offenders. If a prosecutor agrees to the release of an accused under these circumstances, they must articulate, in writing, how bail conditions are expected to address public safety concerns, including the risk to re-offend. The amendments also remind prosecutors that, for particularly serious offences, detention can be sought even if there is no prior criminal record. RMA appreciates that specific changes to the bail system are within federal jurisdiction and that the Government of Alberta has continued to advocate for changes to the current bail system to the Government of Canada. Although the response from the Government of Alberta on the other actions requested in the resolution is unsatisfactory and includes no details as to if or how the province plans to move forward, advocacy efforts from Alberta Justice are appreciated. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met** and will continue to advocate for the Government of Alberta to take action on this issue at the provincial level.

Resolution 12-23S

Casino Opportunities for Charitable Organizations

Northern Sunrise County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction

Alberta's government recognizes that charitable organizations play a vital role in the health of our communities. We also recognize the importance of charitable efforts in supporting Albertans, and we remain committed to supporting charitable organizations in their missions.

I appreciate the RMA's views on casino opportunities for charitable organizations, and I am pleased to share that AGLC was able to use feedback received during the 2021 Charitable Gaming Review to support a number of amendments to the Charitable Gaming Policies Handbook. These changes focus on increasing flexibility in the use of gaming proceeds and reducing unnecessary financial reporting requirements for charitable organizations across the province. Some specific examples include:

- allowing for more administration expenses to be covered by gaming proceeds;
- removing the 50 per cent restriction on facility expenses for groups;

- accommodating arts groups to use proceeds for travel to events outside Alberta without the requirement for the event to have an adjudicated/judged element; and
- removing the requirement for a Statutory Declaration.

Ultimately, these changes reduce the time and resources dedicated to administration so charitable organizations can redirect their resources to the delivery of the programs and services that benefit Albertans.

Two further changes with significant anticipated impacts were increases to the timeframe for charities to spend gaming proceeds (from 24 to 36 months), and increases to the amount of gaming proceeds charities can request to retain (from \$75,000 to \$100,000). Allowing charitable organizations to retain more funds for longer periods of time enables them to budget more sustainably and ensure they can offer their important programs and services well into the future.

Our government takes pride in offering and continuing to support one of the most generous charitable gaming models in Canada. To that end, I will continue to work with AGLC to monitor charitable gaming policies to reduce red tape where appropriate, as well as to identify emerging opportunities to support the long-term sustainability of Alberta's charitable organizations, including those in rural municipalities.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta (GOA) response references changes made to the charitable gaming model in 2021. While the changes may have modest benefits to all charitable organizations in slightly reducing administrative tasks associated with volunteering at casinos, it made no changes to how casino proceeds are distributed across the province's gaming regions or other changes to lessen the revenue gap that exists between Edmonton- and Calgary-based charitable organizations and those elsewhere in the province.

In 2018, RMA released a report with an analysis of the charitable gaming revenue gap and a series of common-sense recommendations that would increase the benefit of casino events for rural charities while having a minimal impact on those in Edmonton and Calgary. Those recommendations were as follows:

Recommendation 1: Pool a portion of the revenues generated in each region and distribute equally to all regions

Pooling 20% of revenues generated in each casino region and sharing them equally among all regions is a first step towards equality. This approach will not require fundamental changes to the current model and will significantly reduce the current revenue gap among regions.

Recommendation 2: Address inequities associated with the model

Revising the current travel and expense policies will reduce unfair costs that rural organizations incur to volunteer at casinos in comparison to organizations located near casinos. This and other minor changes will not disrupt the model but will help address inequities associated with it.

Recommendation 3: Stakeholders, including the AGLC, RMA and AUMA, should take a collaborative approach to improving the current gaming model

An inequitable structure disadvantages some organizations and advantages others. Previous consultations have resulted in entrenched positions in which those disadvantaged by the current model call for change and those advantaged call for the status quo. For meaningful improvements to be made, all stakeholders must acknowledge that the current system is not equal, and the model can be improved to better support organizations in all areas of the province.

Recommendation 4: Regularly Review the Model and Proceed Towards Equality

Over the past several decades, review of the model has been inconsistent, as has government willingness to adopt changes recommended through the review process. The Government of Alberta must commit to regularly reviewing the model (preferably every five years) and striving to move the system closer to complete equality each time until it is achieved.

RMA submitted the report to the GOA in 2018 and did not receive a response. RMA also used the recommendations as the basis for their participation in the 2021 engagement on the gaming model, but none of the recommendations were included or even informed the modest changes to the model that came from the review process. Unlike some groups that have called for the complete elimination of gaming regions or a “ground up” redevelopment of the model, RMA’s recommendations are relatively minor, would cause little to no operational impacts to AGLC or charitable organizations, and would make a meaningful difference to charitable organizations across Alberta. Despite this, the GOA continues to ignore the need to have a serious discussion about the impacts of the model’s inequities on rural charitable organizations and what common-sense solutions (such as those in the RMA report) could be implemented.

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

Resolution 13-23S

Municipal Access to Open Data

Smoky Lake County

Carried

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Alberta Technology and Innovation

Alberta's government recognizes that rural communities are essential partners in growing the province's economy and building the province's technology and innovation sector. As the RMA has acknowledged, the Government of Alberta has made efforts to improve open data access for municipalities, research organizations, and all Albertans. Alberta's Technology and Innovation Strategy is committed to "advancing a system of supports that facilitate commercialization of Alberta research and innovations." To further the goals of Alberta's Technology and Innovation Strategy, the government also continues to advance a data strategy. This strategy will leverage the value of the data that government creates and collects to allow for better access and analysis, enhanced security, and the continued protection of personal information.

Technology and Innovation is also responsible for Open Government Program, which includes the Open Government Portal. Users of the Open Government Program, including municipalities, can request and suggest specific publications, datasets, and resources that would support innovation and our shared economic goals. We are committed to continually exploring opportunities to provide open data to support local governments, businesses, and Albertans, and you can find more information at <https://open.alberta.ca/suggest>.

Reliable, accessible, and open data is an essential tool to support informed, effective decision-making; provide services; and enhance economic diversification. Appropriate data management is critical to achieving this.

While much has been achieved in advancing access to data, we recognize there is more work to be done. Technology and Innovation welcomes municipalities and the RMA to share with the department any feedback and specific opportunities regarding data.

I understand that the Honourable Nate Horner, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, will be providing a comprehensive response to Resolution 16-23S — Applied Research Funding. From the Ministry of Technology and Innovation's perspective, Alberta has developed a strong network of private and public organizations that play a significant role in supporting Alberta, attracting investment, and growing the province's technology and innovation sectors, including agricultural research. One of these organizations is Alberta Innovates, which provides funding for programs covering agri-food and bio-industrial innovation, material research, and graduate student scholarships.

I am always interested in learning of further opportunities for collaboration with municipalities. Thank you again for taking the time to share these new resolutions with the Government of Alberta.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

The Government of Alberta response indicates an awareness of the need for improved access to Open Data and a commitment to continue to utilize Alberta's Technology and Innovation Strategy to advance this priority. The Ministry also welcomed feedback and specific opportunities from municipalities, which aligns with the RMA's goal of increased communication between levels of government. The RMA will engage with members to develop a better understanding of what data municipalities require access to and will use this information to follow up with the Government of Alberta. RMA will monitor the implementation of the Alberta's Technology and Innovation Strategy in regards to open data access. RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Accepted in Principle**. The resolution will be revisited moving forward to determine whether more data is ultimately made available to municipalities.

Resolution 14-23S

Hydrogen Industry Support

Strathcona County

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Natural Resources Canada, Alberta Energy**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Alberta Energy

In November 2021, Alberta released the provincial Hydrogen Roadmap to chart our path to becoming a leader in the global clean hydrogen economy space, ensuring our province retains its place as an international supplier of responsible energy products. The Hydrogen Roadmap recognizes that cost-competitive hydrogen with a low carbon intensity — in other words, clean hydrogen — is integrated at-scale within our existing energy systems, including transportation, heat, power generation and storage, industrial use, and exports to international markets.

Resolution 14-23S, carried by the RMA to support and advocate for hydrogen initiatives and the emergence of energy leaders in the province, is aligned with Alberta's objectives and policy pillars in the Hydrogen Roadmap. Specifically, the RMA's recognition that Alberta, its municipalities and its citizens are committed to Alberta's economic recovery through economic diversification, including being a safe and reliable supplier of energy worldwide aligns well with the roadmap's safety-first objective applied across the hydrogen value chain and our ambition to build new market demand for clean hydrogen.

In addition, the RMA's recognition that Alberta is home to researchers and innovators in industry and within post-secondary institutions aligns directly with the roadmap's policy pillar to activate technology and innovation, and to prove and scale-up emerging hydrogen technologies.

While Alberta's immediate competitive edge is in hydrogen produced from natural gas, the Hydrogen Roadmap is technology agnostic and includes opportunities to produce low-carbon hydrogen from other production pathways, such as renewables-based production. Electrolytic hydrogen production can be achieved using renewable electricity and water. Emerging technologies like natural gas decomposition, underground gasification, and biomass-derived hydrogen production—all offer opportunities to diversify our hydrogen production while leveraging existing assets.

Alberta is investing directly in the hydrogen economy with the Alberta Petrochemicals Incentive Program, which provides 12 per cent funding on eligible capital costs in Alberta-based facilities producing petrochemicals, hydrogen, fertilizer, and fuel products using natural gas as a feedstock. Alberta has also committed to providing \$50 million in funding over four years to launch the Clean Hydrogen Centre of Excellence, administered by Alberta Innovates, to work with federal agencies and support local innovation in the hydrogen sector.

The Government of Alberta looks forward to continuing working with the RMA to attract investment capital to Alberta, support emerging clean hydrogen markets across our province, and expedite hydrogen carrier exports to international markets.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

Although RMA is pleased that the Government of Alberta will continue to support the Hydrogen Roadmap and provide funding that was previously committed to the industry, the resolution calls specifically for increased commitment and resources to promote and support the hydrogen sector. As a result, the RMA assigns this a status of **Intent Not Met**. The RMA will continue to advocate to the governments of Alberta and Canada for increased supports.

Resolution 15-23S

Capital Funding Support for Housing Management Bodies

Birch Hills County

Carried

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Alberta Seniors Community and Social Services

With respect to funding support for Capital Maintenance and Renewal (CMR), Seniors, Community and Social Services (SCSS) provides capital grant funding for supported facilities and capital investment funding for facilities owned by the Alberta Social Housing Corporation (ASHC). Capital Plan 2023 includes \$86 million in capital investment CMR and \$8.1 million in grant funded CMR over three fiscal years.

Housing providers submit their CMR priorities to the ministry through their annual Business Plans submitted at the end of June. Housing providers should consider requisition as a first step for CMR projects in non-ASHC owned lodges. For ASHC-owned facilities, the department prioritizes CMR projects based on factors that include the life of the asset and the health and safety of tenants and ensuring the building's condition is in alignment with all CMR projects across the Government of Alberta.

In cases where local resources are not available to deal with locally-owned facilities, housing providers should reach out to ministry staff to explore options for essential CMR work. Although grant funding is limited, it is available to support priority CMR projects. Requests for grantfunded CMR projects for locally-owned facilities are similarly prioritized for consideration.

The department will also be undertaking a review of the Seniors Lodge Program in alignment with strategic government direction. The 2023/2024 review objectives ensure that the program increases seniors' housing in line with population growth and demand, providing the program with the necessary flexibility and increasing the long-term financial sustainability of lodges while enabling them to serve as community hubs in rural areas.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA appreciated the response from Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services (SCSS) acknowledging the current budget for CMR projects (Capital Plan 2023 includes \$86 million in capital investment CMR and \$8.1 million in grant funded CMR over three fiscal years). However, the resolution indicates that current provincial grant amounts are insufficient to support adequate capital investment and maintenance in seniors facilities and an improved approach is needed. RMA will follow up with SCSS to better understand how they allocate grant funding and determine an overall available grant funding amount, and will advocate for increases moving forward. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 16-23S

Applied Research Associations Funding

Northern Sunrise County

Carried

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation

Thank you for your March 29, 2023 email regarding the recent resolution endorsed at the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) Spring 2023 Convention.

Agricultural Research Associations (ARAs) and the Alberta Research and Extension Council of Alberta are recognized as valued partners in agricultural research programming and delivery of extension activities to farmers and ranchers across Alberta. Agriculture and Irrigation (AGI) supports the vital work ARAs undertake to provide unbiased extension information to Alberta's agriculture sector.

Results Driven Agriculture Research (RDAR) provides operational funding to support Alberta's 12 ARAs. In 2022-23, ARAs received \$2.5 million in operational funding – slightly more than the funding that was provided under the discontinued Agriculture Opportunities Fund. RDAR also initiated and facilitated a process to examine the operational needs of ARAs. This work resulted in a Harmonized Base Funding Proposal the ARAs shared with the department and RDAR in summer 2022.

AGI and RDAR are committed to funding ARA operations to ensure knowledge transfer between academia and farmers. The value ARAs provide to Albertans was recognized in budget 2023-24 through an annual increase of

\$1.5 million in operational funding, bringing the total funding to support ARA operations to \$4 million per year for the next two years.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA is pleased that the Government of Alberta's 2023 budget has committed to increased multi-year operational funding for ARA operations. This resolution is assigned a status of **Accepted**, and RMA will monitor future budgets to ensure funding remains.

Resolution 17-23S

Negative Impact of Bill C-21 on Albertans

MD of Greenview

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Justice Canada**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Not yet received.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA has continued to work with a federal consultant to speak to the Senate on this issue, as rural Albertans are adversely impacted by the passing of this Bill. The Bill is currently in its third reading within the Senate. There have been several political delays with this Bill, however the RMA is hopeful that progress will be made on this Bill in the new year. RMA will continue to request a formal response on this issue and will address this resolution during an upcoming federal advocacy trip.

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

Resolution 19-23S

Non-Profit Exemption from Federal Fuel Charge

MD of Smoky River

Carried

► **Advocacy Target: Finance Canada**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government Response

Not yet received.

RMA Reaction and Follow-up

RMA has not received a formal response on this matter, however, staff continues to work with the Government of Canada to ensure a rural voice is at the table when carbon tax exemptions are discussed at the

federal level. As RMA has not yet received a formal response, this resolution is assigned a status of **Incomplete Information**.

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		
5-22F	Fertilizer Emission Reduction Target Impacts	Intent Not Met
24-22F	Improved Crop Insurance for Market Gardens	Accepted in Principle
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
BROADBAND AND CONNECTIVITY		
9-20F	CRTC Aggregate Wholesale Pricing to Mandate Rural Investment	Accepted in Part
COMMUNITY SERVICES		
10-22F	Sustainability of Small Rural Schools	Intent Not Met
19-20F	Reinstatement of the Benefit Contribution Grant for Early Childhood Educators	Intent Not Met
EMERGENCY SERVICES		
1-22F	Volunteer Firefighters as Medical First Responders	Intent Not Met
6-22F	Financial Burden of Emergency Service Response on Crown Lands	Intent Not Met
7-22S	Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) Report Funding	Accepted

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
1-21F	Emergency Medical Services Capacity and Service Delivery in Rural Alberta	Accepted
ENERGY		
9-22F	Renewable Energy Project Reclamation Requirements	Intent Not Met
11-22F	Disparity in Electricity Distribution and Transmission Rates	Intent Not Met
21-22F	Loss of Agricultural Land to Renewable Energy Projects	Intent Not Met
23-22F	Small Scale Generation Regulation – Interconnection Challenges	Intent Not Met
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		
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 <i>Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act</i>	Intent Not Met
19-22F	Portion of Funding from Public Lands Camping Pass Directed to Municipalities	Intent Not Met
2-22S	Negative Impact of Carbon Tax on Rural Albertans	Accepted in Part
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
HEALTH AND SENIORS		
2-22F	Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists Training for Rural Healthcare	Intent Not Met

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
8-22F	Rural Mental Health Advocacy	Intent Not Met
12-22F	Restore Grants-in-Lieu of Taxes for Public Housing Management Authorities	Accepted in Part
17-22F	Government Funding For Nurse Practitioners	Accepted in Principle
5-21F	Seniors' Foundation Requisitions	Accepted in Part
MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE		
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
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
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT		
7-22F	Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Reform	Intent Not Met
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

#	RESOLUTION TITLE	STATUS
1-20F	Police Funding Model Freeze	Intent Not Met
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE		
18-22F	Regulations for Motorists Passing School Buses with Amber Lights Flashing	Intent Not Met
20-22F	Lost Road Closure Files	Accepted in Part
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
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 5-22F

Fertilizer Emission Reduction Target Impacts

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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. RMA is concerned that the target will not only harm individual agriculture producers, but will lead to unintended consequences by reducing the productivity of existing agricultural land. An April 2023 report from the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food came to a similar conclusion and recommended that “the Government of Canada

- Recognize that Canadian agricultural producers are leading the world in the efficient use of fertilizers and that it not proceed with any mandatory fertilizer emissions reduction policy that would jeopardize farmers’ yields, but instead encourage them to implement best nutrient management practices such as the 4R Program; and
- Examine opportunities to fund research and development and further innovation in the use of fertilizer in agriculture.”

While the fertilizer emissions reduction target remains voluntary, RMA is not aware of any formal response to the Standing Committee’s recommendations by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. RMA assigns this a status of **Intent Not Met**.

Resolution 24-22F

Improved Crop Insurance for Market Gardens

Status: Accepted In Principle

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

DEVELOPMENTS: 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**.

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:

Development of a rural practitioner stream;

Participation of RMA in UCVM programs of outreach to rural municipalities to encourage and support successful rural student admission to UCVM;

Development of an online veterinary support program to help support veterinarians in practice, increasing retention of veterinary professionals;

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

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.

In Budget 2022, Alberta's government committed \$58.5 million over three years in capital funding to expand capacity at the University of Calgary faculty of veterinary medicine to help address the critical shortage of large animal veterinarians. Budget 2022 also provided \$8.4 million to support enrolment expansion in the University of Calgary veterinary medicine program. To increase the number of veterinarians across the province, the GOA recently committed to investing an additional \$10 million, for a total of \$68.5 million, to support the construction of the new Veterinary Learning Commons building at the University of Calgary's Spy Hill Campus. These investments are 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

Status: Accepted

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

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

Resolution 3-20F

Support for Alberta Farmland Trust

Status: Accepted in Principle

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

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

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

DEVELOPMENTS: RMA appreciates Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation's (AI) 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, AI indicates they support amending the *Income Tax Act* to recognize donors of agricultural lands for protection.

The AI 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 Protected Areas 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 and 2023 has seen 21 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.

The 2023 growing season saw several challenges due to droughts across the province. As conditions are likely to be similar or worse in 2024, adequate financial support is essential for the safety of Alberta's agricultural sector. This should consist of reviewing current proactive programs available to ensure they are as streamlined and accessible as possible, and developing enhanced criteria and processes for allocating emergency funding during or following a drought event. It is challenging to continue relying on federal AgriRecovery support from the federal government when drought concerns and issues are increasing annually.

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.

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 10-22F

Sustainability of Small Rural Schools

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 community 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 is currently working with the Alberta School Boards Association and will be developing joint advocacy efforts on this topic.

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

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 childcare 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 1-22F

Volunteer Firefighters as Medical First Responders

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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.

In Fall 2023, Alberta Health announced a massive restructuring of Alberta Health Services. The restructuring includes a focus on improving EMS response times and improving patient flow and continuity of care. The primary focus for AHS going forward will be acute care. RMA is cautiously optimistic that the new AHS structure will assist in parts of the recommendations within this resolution to be further implemented.

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 6-22F

Financial Burden of Emergency Service Response on Crown Lands

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 7-22S

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. RMA is also hopeful that the announced changes to AHS and Alberta's healthcare delivery system will result in improvements to EMS service delivery capacity.

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 9-22F

Renewable Energy Project Reclamation Requirements

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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.

In response to the AUC inquiry into electricity generation development, RMA provided the following input into how a renewable energy financial security system should be developed:

- Ensure accountability for end of life without disincentivizing industry investment;
- Be easily transferable to ensure accountability remains with the project owner if the project is sold; and
- Ensure that adequate assets are available to the province to reclaim the land in the event that the owner becomes insolvent or otherwise unable to meet reclamation requirements.

RMA’s input also emphasizes that security requirements should be based on the full estimated cost of reclaiming the land, as close to its original state as possible. While the costs may be assessed on a project-by-project basis, the Government of Alberta or the AUC need to prescribe expectations as to the state in which the land should be returned to. It will also be key that as a project progresses into its life span, regular assessments of what expected decommissioning and reclamation be reviewed.

As the Government of Alberta has the expertise and fiscal capacity to manage the reclamation process, including disbursement of the funds, the RMA believes this responsibility should be assigned to the AUC itself or the government ministry. Individual landowners who may not have the knowledge to make informed decisions regarding security requirements should not be responsible for this technical

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

Resolution 11-22F

Disparity in Electricity Distribution and Transmission Rates

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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.

Recently, Alberta Affordability and Utilities released a public engagement survey related to the Transmission Policy. The engagement focused on how Alberta's transmission development and approval process can best support affordability, reliability and decarbonization. The RMA's input into this process emphasized the need for some level of transmission planning that better balances continued freedom for generators to build where they choose while recognizing that projects requiring significant new transmission infrastructure may require higher public investment. This approach should not be prescriptive but rather based on stronger locational pricing signals to incentivise projects in optimal areas. Further, RMA commented on the need to include climate change discussions within congestion conversations, as severe weather incidents have been impacting the reliability of electricity to rural Alberta in recent weather events and this must be considered as part of the conversation moving forward. Although this approach is not perfect, the RMA sees value in providing input on this approach and ensuring that it meets the needs of rural Alberta. RMA will continue to participate in engagement opportunities related to electricity transmission and distribution in Alberta, and advocate for this resolution.

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

Resolution 21-22F

Loss of Agricultural Land to Renewable Energy Projects

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS:

The RMA recently 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. Based on the committee's findings, RMA has put forward several recommendations, many of which pertain specifically to the AUC:

- That the GOA and quasi-judicial agencies work with stakeholders to develop an approach to integrating land use impact assessments and reclamation requirements into project approvals.
- That the GOA and quasi-judicial agencies work together and with stakeholders, including municipalities, to regularly adapt approval processes to industry changes.
- That the AER and AUC adopt NRB requirements related to aligning projects with municipal development plans.
- That municipalities have automatic status as directly affected parties and automatic standing at hearings.

Further, the AUC has recently launched an inquiry into electrical generation projects, including their impacts on agricultural lands. The RMA provided insight into this through a comment matrix and recommended:

- The AUC should specifically include a consideration of the land and soil type to the proposed project, as well as other considerations such as current and historical land use, climate and weather trends, drought and flood risk etc. within their project review process.
- Rural municipalities have a long history of balancing preservation of agricultural land with development and their input should be weighted in the approval process.

RMA sees the need for increased municipal input in the approval process for the AUC as a way to balance the need for growth and the need to preserve agricultural lands. The inquiry is set to be completed in early 2024 and the RMA hopes to see vast improvement to the protection of agricultural lands in the renewable energy approval process.

With the AUC inquiry ongoing, this resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**. RMA will continue to participate in the AUC inquiry process and ensure a rural voice is heard.

Resolution 23-22F

Small Scale Generation Regulation – Interconnection Challenges

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 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. RMA continues to monitor this issue as the results of the ministerial order are yet to be seen by municipalities.

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 13-22F

Enhanced Wetland Replacement Program

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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*

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: Bill C-234, an act to amend the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act*, passed third reading in the Senate on December 12, 2024. It will now be referred to the House for further debate. This bill, if passed, would exempt carbon taxes from propane and natural gas used to heat or cool barns and livestock buildings and dry grain – extending the carbon tax exemptions available to farmers on gasoline and diesel. RMA continues to express interest in participating as a witness when this bill is debated. RMA expects significant progress on this bill to be made in the next sitting, starting January 29,

2024. This resolution is assigned a status of **Intent Not Met**, which will be revisited based on the progress of the Bill C-234.

Resolution 19-22F

Portion of Funding from Public Lands Camping Pass Directed to Municipalities

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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.

RMA staff met with several municipalities bordering major provincial parks to discuss the importance of offsetting costs of public land camping passes for neighbouring municipalities. The key reasons for this ask are that although public lands camping is under provincial jurisdiction, the neighbouring municipality is still obligated to provide emergency assistance within the camping areas. Further, the increase in camping increases the need for other services within the municipality, such as waste management, parking lots, road maintenance, and general support for people passing through. These services are not only essential, but promote the area as a safe and well-maintained place to visit and experience. These services are also expensive and require adequate compensation, especially if the camping pass is already implemented.

In 2010, a report was released from municipalities located in the South Eastern Slopes, including the MD of Pincher Creek, the MD of Ranchland, the MD of Bighorn, and Clearwater County. The report outlines recommendations regarding:

- Planning and funding
- Roads
- Weed control
- Emergency services
- Awareness and education
- Organizing and monitoring

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 off-set 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 2-22S

Negative Impact of Carbon Tax on Rural Albertans

Status: Accepted in Part

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 Part**. The impact analysis has been released on the RMA website, and includes the following key findings related to impacts on rural municipalities:

- There are two key pathways through which the federal carbon pricing policy is expected to impact rural municipalities in Alberta:
 - Increasing the prices faced by municipalities on goods that are directly and indirectly impacted by the carbon tax such as fuel, heating, and electricity, or indirectly impacted by the carbon tax (i.e., emissions-intensive goods).
 - Influencing the long-term viability of key industries (e.g., oil and gas extraction and processing) that constitute a meaningful portion of a municipality's assessment base, thereby impacting the value of assets available for taxation. Rural municipalities tend to host the majority of heavy industry associated with resource extraction and processing that underpin a considerable portion of the provincial economy.

The report also examines impacts on rural households and includes the following key findings:

- Direct costs of carbon tax is relatively similar between urban and rural households in Alberta. When revenue recycling is considered, the average household in both urban and rural Alberta is not currently impacted by direct carbon tax payments.
- Non-price costs of the federal fuel charge, including impacts to households through wage reductions and unemployment, may have a more pronounced impact on rural households as compared to urban households, as rural communities in Alberta host a relatively larger proportion of the province's labour force in carbon-intensive industries.

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 Protected Areas (AEPA) 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.

AEPA 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 AEPA 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 Protected Areas (AEPA) 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. RMA is currently continuing to reach out to AEPA to seek a response.

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 Protected Areas (AEPA) 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. AEPA 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. AEPA'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.

HEALTH AND SENIORS

Resolution 2-22F

Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists Training for Rural Healthcare

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 8-22F

Rural Mental Health Advocacy

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 12-22F

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

Status: Accepted in Part

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).

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 17-22F

Government Funding For Nurse Practitioners

Status: Accepted in Principle

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.

DEVELOPMENTS:

The Government of Alberta has committed to a new salary-based pay system for Nurse Practitioners (NPs), to be launched in early 2024. The model is expected to include payment for a specified number of clinical hours and other commitments, such as caring for a certain number of patients.

NPs who opt into the compensation model will also qualify for caseload support once their patient caseloads are established, as announced in October 2023. The three-year, \$57 million support program will help primary health care providers manage an increasing number of patients. Each provider has the potential to receive up to \$10,000 annually to help support the added administrative work associated with implementing the new model.

RMA staff have collaborated and discussed this issue with the Nurse Practitioner Association of Alberta (NPAA) and are pleased with the new funding model for NPs in Alberta.

Due to the continued commitment from the GOA to move towards a salary-based funding model for NPs in Alberta, RMA has assigned this resolution a status of **Accepted In Principle**.

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.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

Resolution 3-22F

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

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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, action on 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, 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 of the gravel industry related to abiding by community aggregate payment levies.

Resolution 4-22F

Well Drilling Equipment Tax Regulation

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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, the total number of wells drilled in October 2020 (when the WDET was eliminated) was 202, while 835 wells were drilled in October 2023.

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.

RMA appreciates that the current WDET structure does not consider industry trends such as the level of drilling activity or commodity prices. RMA plans to reach out the Government of Alberta and other stakeholders to discuss the possibility of a new WDET structure in which the implementation of the tax, and potentially the rates charged, are linked to industry economic performance. As the WDET is directly linked to short-term infrastructure impacts associated with new drilling, this approach would allow for a balance between industry and municipal concerns.

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

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 (DRP) 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.

In spring and summer 2023, wildfires impacted dozens of rural municipalities across the province. Many municipalities had no choice but to spend significant amounts to support evacuations, frontline firefighting, emergency coordination, and other costs. While municipalities typically budget for some level of emergency or disaster response each year, the scale of the wildfires was unprecedented in many areas. As a result of this change to the DRP cost-sharing requirements, some RMA members have reported direct costs of up to \$2 million to cover their 10% share. As a result, some municipalities may be required to divert budget from other planned projects, reduce service levels, or exhaust financial reserves. Responding to a provincewide disaster should not result in this level of local impact.

RMA is currently conducting a member survey seeking input on rural municipal experiences with responding to 2023's wildfires. The survey includes several questions related to the DRP which will provide further details on the impacts of this policy change.

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 a 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. 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. Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services is expected to conduct an engagement on the Police Funding Model (PFM) in late 2024, prior to the expiry (and likely renewal) of the Police Funding Model Regulation. RMA will emphasize the need for increased transparency on municipal costs associated with the PFM during this engagement process.

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.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Resolution 7-22F

Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Reform

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 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 with 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.” RMA has recently discussed the ICF engagement process with Municipal Affairs. Engagement is expected to begin in early 2024 and RMA is hopeful that the definition of core services for the purpose of ICFs will be a core focus of engagement.

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.

The second operative clause of the resolution requests that the Government of Alberta ensure that municipalities with a growth management board (GMB) are not required to enter into ICFs with one another. While the *Municipal Government Act* MGA already exempts these municipalities from developing ICFs with one another, Alberta Municipalities (ABmunis) members have endorsed a resolution calling for mandatory ICFs within GMBs. Rural GMB members are already frustrated by the inequitable voting structures and added red tape associated with GMBs. Adding yet another mandatory intermunicipal service delivery requirement would create added complexity and tension to GMBs. Any issues typically addressed through ICFs could be discussed at the GMB table, or through voluntary ICFs or other agreements between GMB members. Mandating ICFs in this context will result in three distinct levels of decision-making: local (through municipal plans and decisions), intermunicipal (through ICFs), and regional (through GMBs). The benefits of this are minimal, and the risks of further confusion and conflict among decision-making levels is significant. As such, RMA will continue to support voluntary ICFs among GMB members.

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 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 consisted of five RMA members volunteers and was chaired by Vulcan County Reeve and RMA District 1 Director Jason Schneider. QJAC engaged with RMA members, provincial quasi-judicial agencies such as those listed in resolution 7-20F, and other stakeholders. QJAC's final report, released in November 2023. Included the following recommendations relevant to this resolution:

- ♦ That the GOA and quasi-judicial agencies work with stakeholders to develop an approach to integrating land use impact assessments and reclamation requirements into project approvals.
- ♦ That the AER and AUC adopt NRCB requirements related to aligning projects with municipal development plans.
- ♦ That municipalities have automatic status as directly affected parties and automatic standing at all hearings.

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.

In spring/summer 2023, dozens of RMA members were impacted by wildfires, many of which submitted DRP claims. As of the writing of this update (December 2023), multiple municipalities had not yet received some or all DRP funding from government, including promised “advances.” As many municipal cost claims are for multiple millions of dollars (some as high as \$25 million), the delays in funding have major impacts on the ability of impacted municipalities to support ongoing recovery, deliver routine services, and budget for the following year. While providing municipalities with advances to support urgent costs while a more extensive review of a municipal application is a positive step, there is little purpose if advances are not provided several months after the DRP claim was made.

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. While RMA is currently gathering member input on impacts and responses to the 2023 wildfires, some municipalities have incurred DRP-eligible costs as high as \$25 million, meaning that a single municipality may face a \$2.5 million financial impact due to the change to a 90/10 cost share.

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 downfalls 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).. 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.

Although the Government of Alberta appears to have taken a step back from actively pursuing the APPS, no official declaration has been made that the APPS will not be revisited in the future. There is no mention of the APPS within the mandate letters for the Minister of Justice or the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services, implying that it is not currently a formal priority for the GOA. However, following the release of the mandate letter, Minister Amery stated that the idea of an APPS is not dead within Alberta Justice, and they will continue to consult with Albertans on how they would like to see policing evolve in the future.

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. RMA expects further engagement to take place in 2024 related to the creation of regulations under the *Police Act* to facilitate the creation of regional police advisory boards and a provincial policing advisory board.

As engagement has occurred, 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.

Based on recent discussions with the RCMP, RMA has learned that due to challenges in recruiting new RCMP officers, a significant portion of funding collected through the PFM has been used by the Government of Alberta to provide capital and operational support to the RCMP that is unrelated to recruitment and hiring of new officers.

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.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Resolution 18-22F

Regulations for Motorists Passing School Buses with Amber Lights Flashing

Status: Intent Not Met

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 20-22F

Lost Road Closure Files

Status: Accepted in Part

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.

DEVELOPMENTS: 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 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. A new plan was implemented in the 2023 season, and RMA will follow up to see how implementation impacted municipalities. . RMA assigns this resolution a status of **Intent Not Met**.

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:

RMA recently formed a member committee to examine the relationship between quasi-judicial agencies and municipalities in relation to approving provincially-regulated developments. The committee gathered 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. The report features several recommendations which focus on how agencies can better integrate a municipal lens into decision making.

- That the GOA and quasi-judicial agencies work with stakeholders to develop an approach to integrating land use impact assessments and reclamation requirements into project approvals.
- That the GOA and quasi-judicial agencies work together and with stakeholders to develop a public interest evaluation framework to assess decision-making and engagement processes.
- That the GOA and quasi-judicial agencies work together and with stakeholders, including municipalities, to regularly adapt approval processes to industry changes.
- That both quasi-judicial agencies and applicants play a direct role in initial project engagement processes.
- That agencies review and redevelop current notification systems to better engage with municipalities at the onset of projects.
- That the AER, AUC and NRCB collaborate to harmonize their respective engagement and approval processes as much as possible.
- That the AER and AUC adopt NRCB requirements related to aligning projects with municipal development plans.
- That municipalities have automatic status as directly affected parties and automatic standing at all hearings.

The report found several areas of concern which the Government of Alberta and regulators should address. Although the AUC inquiry into electricity generation projects may address some issues related to the AUC's process, there are other quasi-judicial agencies which need to be reviewed to address the lack of municipal perspective into the current processes.

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.

It should be noted that over the past year, RMA has participated in an Alberta Municipal Affairs-led working group planning the assessment model review (AMR) engagement process. A strategy to balance the need for confidentiality with the need for transparency to broader stakeholders and the general public has been a focus of the pre-engagement process and is addressed in the terms of reference for the engagement. While it is not yet known how effectively this balance will be achieved when the technical engagement commences, RMA appreciates the focus placed on transparency by Alberta Municipal Affairs. Unfortunately, this focus is specific to the AMR, and is not reflective of a broader shift in approach on the part of the Government of Alberta.

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