



RMA
RURAL MUNICIPALITIES
of ALBERTA

Rural Voices, Provincial Choices:

RMA 2025 Provincial Budget Submission

January 2025



About the Rural Municipalities of Alberta

The Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocates on behalf of Alberta’s rural municipalities. RMA’s members consist of 63 municipal districts and counties, five specialized municipalities, and the Special Areas Board. While villages and small towns are spread across rural Alberta, these are considered urban municipalities and are not represented by the RMA. The RMA’s 69 members have several common traits: large land masses, small populations, and a lack of a traditional “population centre.” RMA members provide municipal governance to approximately 85% of Alberta’s land mass; Alberta is unique in Canada in that municipalities govern land throughout the entire province; from border to border.

This Submission

RMA’s 2025 provincial budget submission is divided into four themes:

1. Rural Municipal Viability: Strong Rural Municipalities Mean a Strong Rural Alberta
2. Rural Municipal Infrastructure: Powering the Provincial Economic Engine
3. Rural Community Services: Supporting One Another
4. Rural Health, Emergency, and Disaster Services: Safe and Caring Communities

Each theme will include background information, specific budget-related action items, target ministries, and an explanation of why it is important to rural municipalities. The intent of the submission is to provide government decision-makers with a combination of “big picture” rural municipal budget priorities along with specific recommendations for changes or enhancement related to existing programs or issues.

It is important to note that not all funding priority issues for RMA members are included in this submission. This represents a cross-section of the wide range of important budget-related issues that impact rural municipalities.

1. Rural Municipal Viability: Strong Rural Municipalities Mean a Strong Rural Alberta

All municipalities in Alberta have similar tools, responsibilities and powers; however, Alberta's rural municipalities are facing unique viability challenges due to the high cost of providing services in rural areas, decreases in provincial grants, and instability in access to property taxes. A combination of inflation, replacement and maintenance of aging infrastructure, and other costs passed on to municipalities from the Government of Alberta have significantly increased the financial burden rural municipalities face. At the same time, the Government of Alberta has not meaningfully increased grants for municipalities in general, and new municipal grants fail to provide a dedicated rural stream to ensure that funds are available for RMA members. At the same time provincial policy decisions or inaction continue to reduce municipal tax revenue. These issues culminate in viability risks for rural municipalities.

Specific budget requests related to municipal funding are covered in the following sections. To set the context for the remainder of the submission, RMA would like to highlight the following concerns that are impacting rural municipal viability.

Municipal tax autonomy

Municipalities rely on property taxes as a major source of revenue. An important element of municipal property taxes is that rates are controlled by the municipality and can be set in response to local needs. This autonomy is core to municipal governance, and policy suggestions that would seek to limit this ability through harmonization of tax rates across municipalities, linkage of tax rates to commodity prices or economic indicators, or other measures are detrimental to municipal financial health and local autonomy. If municipalities lose control of setting tax rates, they lose control of their major own-source revenue stream. As a result, municipalities would become more dependent on provincial grants, which both threatens municipal viability and increases the budgetary requests the Government of Alberta will receive.

Municipal tax revenue

In recent years the Government of Alberta has made several policy decisions that have impacted rural municipal tax revenue. These include the ongoing issue of unpaid taxes from the oil and gas industry, the removal of the well drilling equipment tax, the three-year tax holiday on assessment of newly drilled wells, and the 35% reduction in assessment on shallow gas wells. As a result of these policy decisions, RMA members lost \$331 million in property tax revenue from 2021 to 2023. As a result, RMA members are less able to respond to changing local needs, provide services, and are more reliant on provincial grants to fund their operations. These policies threaten municipal viability and negatively impact all other property owners in the form of increased tax rates and/or decreased service levels.

Funding to address infrastructure deficits in a dissolution

Rural municipalities are not alone in facing significant financial pressures. While the specific drivers vary, small urban municipalities are also facing financial strain, leading some to dissolve into their surrounding rural municipality. When this happens, the absorbing municipality assumes the infrastructure deficit of the previous urban municipality. While the absorbing municipality receives some increased funding through the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF), this increase is limited to a relatively short period of time and is insufficient to address the accumulated infrastructure deficit. When rural municipalities absorb an urban municipality, they require dedicated and sufficient funding to address the inherited infrastructure deficit.

Action items

Action item	Importance	Lead Ministry(ies)
Ensure that municipalities remain in full control of setting their tax rates to meet local needs	Will maintain municipal autonomy in controlling local budgets and corresponding tax rates and service levels.	Alberta Municipal Affairs
Eliminate policies that utilize municipal tax revenue to subsidize other sectors	Municipalities set tax rates to meet their needs based on local conditions. Initiatives that reduce tax revenue place municipalities in a position to reduce services or increase taxes.	Government-wide
Develop funding programs to support rural municipalities in taking on infrastructure deficits following a dissolution	In a dissolution, rural municipalities inherit the infrastructure deficit of the municipality they are absorbing. In this scenario, dedicated funding to address the infrastructure deficit is required to maintain the financial health of the rural municipality.	Alberta Municipal Affairs

Why it is important

Financially strong rural municipalities can respond to local needs, provide services and infrastructure to Alberta's energy sector, and operate with lower levels of provincial government support. Policies that negatively impact rural municipalities' ability to generate their own revenue will increase their reliance on provincial government grants, leading to an increased financial reliance on the provincial government.

2. Rural Municipal Infrastructure: Powering the Provincial Economic Engine

Rural Alberta plays a foundational role in the province's economic success. The energy, agricultural, forestry, and other natural resource sectors have long been the driving force of Alberta's economy. However, the physical infrastructure supporting these industries — including roads, bridges, utilities, communications, and transportation networks — have faced chronic underinvestment. Considering Alberta’s rapid population growth and future economic development initiatives, the demands on rural infrastructure will only increase.

Rural infrastructure is integral to the functioning of Alberta's broader economy. High-quality roads and transportation networks enable the efficient movement of goods necessary to facilitate and support growth within the province, but also for the movement of commodities that are crucial to provincial exports.

Without modern, well-maintained infrastructure, rural Alberta’s economic potential is severely limited. Thus, adequate investment in rural infrastructure is not only a matter of equity but also a smart economic strategy for the provincial government.

Currently, infrastructure in rural Alberta is aging and underfunded, with many communities struggling to maintain and upgrade essential services. As identified in RMA’s recently-released [Rural Municipal Infrastructure Deficit Project](#), the overall rural municipal infrastructure deficit in Alberta is presently \$17.25 billion and is expected to grow to \$40.71 billion in 2028 based on current provincial funding available for rural projects. As the province's population grows and its economy diversifies, with more intense and frequent extreme weather events, infrastructure needs will only intensify, necessitating a significant and sustained commitment from the provincial government.

Undeniably, rural municipalities face unique challenges such as lower population densities, higher construction costs, and often greater distances from urban centres, all of which make infrastructure development more expensive and complex. Without robust and safe infrastructure, Alberta is at risk of losing industrial development and financial investments to competing jurisdictions; a stable, predictable and adequate provincial funding program is essential for the well-being of the entirety of the province.

Action items

Action item	Importance	Lead Ministry(ies)
Increase Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF) funding to address the rural infrastructure deficit, and re-visit the allocation formula to enhance equitability among municipal types.	Including the projected 2025 allocation, the LGFF program is set to be funded below the historical average in six of the last eight years, and far below the highest levels of its predecessor (MSI). The current LGFF funding formula is also heavily weighted by population, leaving rural municipalities at a significant disadvantage, as it does not adequately recognize the infrastructure cost impacts of industrial development in rural municipalities.	Alberta Municipal Affairs
Commit to enhanced, long-term Strategic Transportation	The STIP program provides (mainly rural) municipalities with crucial application-based funding for local road bridges, resource roads, and community airports. Since 2013, annual STIP funding has fluctuated between a low	Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors

<p>Infrastructure Program (STIP) funding.</p>	<p>of \$0 and a high of \$43 million, with an annual average of about \$23 million. RMA members collectively manage over 14,000 bridges and culverts, many of which are nearing their end of life and providing crucial access to natural resources in industries such as oil and gas, forestry, and agriculture.</p> <p>RMA’s recent completion of its Rural Municipal Infrastructure Deficit Project revealed a \$2.29 billion bridge infrastructure deficit. RMA would welcome the opportunity to work with Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors to determine the adequate STIP funding amount necessary to close the existing bridge infrastructure gap and ensure rural bridges can continue to support Alberta’s growth.</p>	
<p>Expand current grant programs and/or create new programs to support rural capital projects leading to industrial development.</p>	<p>RMA members have expressed frustration with the lack of grant support for municipal infrastructure projects benefiting non-residential/industrial development. This is most evident in the heavy weighting of population as an allocation factor in the LGFF; the requirement that projects funded by the Alberta Municipal Water/Wastewater Program (AMWWP) must service residential water users; and the program parameters in the recently introduced Local Growth and Sustainability Grant (LGSG), which will result in a disproportionate share of the funding (specific to the Growth Component) being allocated to projects in urban municipalities linked to population growth at the expense of projects in rural municipalities linked to industrial/non-residential growth opportunities.</p> <p>Expanding or redefining eligibility for existing grant programs such as LGFF, AMWWP, LGSG, or creating a new program aimed specifically at rural infrastructure projects intended to support non-residential/industrial development would help to level the grant-funding playing field between urban projects, more directly linked to residential growth, and rural projects, often focused on non-residential growth.</p>	<p>Alberta Treasury Board and Finance, Alberta Municipal Affairs, Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors</p>
<p>Expand current and/or create new emergency funding streams for high-priority, high-risk infrastructure.</p>	<p>RMA recognizes the introduction of the Local Growth and Sustainability Grant (LGSG), and appreciates the province’s approach to the Sustainability Component, as it represents an awareness on the part of the province that some municipalities, particularly those with limited capacity or financial resources, may encounter critical infrastructure failure with no local means to respond. However, the LGSG is not an adequate solution to</p>	<p>Alberta Treasury Board and Finance, Alberta Municipal Affairs, Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors</p>

	address larger fundamental issues that place small municipalities in this position.	
Introduce Grant Program to Support Asset Management Program Development by Municipalities	<p>Many current municipal asset management programs have been slow and expensive to develop due to the sheer level of detail that is required for the assets being incorporated into the program. The program would help municipalities gather initial asset data and understand how it can be linked to decision-making. The data collected could also be used to inform provincial funding decisions. This funding should be made widely available to municipalities to support a range of asset management program development, with an emphasis on asset inventorying and condition assessments.</p> <p>The province could further strengthen its promotion of asset management as a municipal practice by developing a new asset data reporting system for municipalities. This system should be flexible enough to accommodate a range of asset management programs.</p>	Alberta Municipal Affairs
Expand the criteria to the Alberta Broadband Fund to enhance broadband connectivity, and to improve cell phone services.	<p>RMA's Internet Speed Testing Summary Report, completed in 2022, indicated rural Albertans realize lower internet speeds than the 50/10 MBPS goal; no RMA District ever reached even 50% of the 50/10 MBPS standard.</p> <p>The Government of Canada's Universal Broadband Fund (UBF) excluded many rural municipalities due to inaccurate eligibility maps. Similarly, a large portion of Alberta's \$390 million funding for high-speed internet went to UBF "top-up" applications, using the same eligibility criteria, which also left many rural areas unfunded. Alberta also allocated \$36 million in the Alberta Broadband Fund (ABF) to expand high-speed internet to rural, remote, and Indigenous households. While the ABF has different criteria, rural municipalities still face challenges. Updating these criteria and increasing the role of municipalities in delivering broadband as a local service could speed up broadband improvements.</p> <p>Rural Alberta still faces challenges with poor cell phone coverage, which risks public safety, limits economic growth, and affects quality of life. A provincial investment in improving coverage would be transformative, boosting both social and economic outcomes for rural communities.</p>	Technology and Innovation

Why it is important

Rural infrastructure is the backbone of Alberta's economy. Without adequate investment, the province risks undermining the potential of its rural communities and industries. A thoughtful, strategic approach to funding – one that includes prioritization – is essential. By adopting a clear and transparent funding framework, Alberta can foster rural economic growth, improve quality of life, and maintain the competitive edge that rural industries provide. Investment into rural infrastructure is not just an expense, it is a critical step towards building a stronger, more resilient Alberta for future generations.

3. Rural Community Services: Supporting One Another

While rural Alberta drives the province’s economy, rural communities are foundational to Alberta’s past, present and future. Because only approximately 18% of Alberta’s population live in rural communities, providing social and community services that may be easily accessible in cities, towns and villages can be challenging. Rural Alberta is characterized by dispersed populations and small hamlets or villages. As a result, rural residents typically accept that some services will not be readily available and may require more travel.

Despite these differences, rural municipalities have faced increasing pressures in recent years to either directly provide or supplement services previously offered or funded by the Government of Alberta. This has placed additional fiscal pressure on municipalities, led to difficult decisions related to service levels and balancing capital and operating funding priorities, and in some cases has led to viability challenges for rural communities.

A great example of emerging provincial social service gaps that have impacted rural residents and municipalities relates to an increase in the use of virtual and telephone-based crisis support as a replacement for in-person service in rural communities. According to a [recent report](#) developed by RMA and University of Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities (ACSRC), the withdrawal of in-person provincial social support services in rural areas had had fiscal impacts on municipalities in the form of increasing their financial commitment to Family and Community Support Services (FCSS). FCSS offices are not designed to address crisis situations, but are often the only local in-person resource available. This trend has impacted municipalities, many of which have had no choice but to increase their funding allocation to FCSS services, even as the provincial contribution remains unchanged. It has also impacted frontline FCSS staff who describe themselves as overworked and unable to focus on the proactive programming that they are mandated to deliver, and rural Albertans facing mental health or social challenges, who are less able to access provincial support and programming due to complex and impersonal virtual platforms.

While this is just one example, municipalities and rural non-profits are facing similar challenges in areas such as affordable housing and homelessness, addictions, victim services, community halls, and others. Similar to municipal infrastructure, provincial support for rural community services is an investment in rural viability and must be treated as such.

Action items

Action item	Importance	Lead Ministry(ies)
Increase FCSS funding amounts to ensure adequate FCSS service availability across Alberta	<p>The FCSS funding model is based on a legislated 80/20 provincial/municipal cost-share. However, because provincial funding for FCSS was stagnant at \$100 million from 2015 to 2023 (with a slight increase to \$105 million in budget 2023), many municipalities have had no choice but to contribute well above their 20% required share to ensure FCSS remains viable in their community. Not only have operational costs increased due to inflation, they have also increased due to the need for FCSS to fill gaps left by declining provincial social service levels in rural communities.</p> <p>According to the RMA/ACSRC report, 63% of municipalities contribute more than their required 20%</p>	Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services

	<p>of local FCSS funding, with many contributing over 35% of FCSS costs. This results in municipalities being forced to make tough decisions to redirect budget from other services or projects to cover rising FCSS operational costs not addressed by the province.</p> <p>At minimum, provincial FCSS funding should increase to \$121 million to keep pace with inflation since its last major increase to \$100 million, in 2015. Ideally, the province should work with municipalities and FCSS providers to better understand the new cost and service pressures facing rural FCSS and design funding levels to address those moving forward.</p>	
<p>Enhance provincial capital support for seniors lodges</p>	<p>Seniors lodges, typically operated by local non-profit housing societies, rely on a combination of provincial funding, municipal requisitions, and fundraising to raise funding required to remain operational.</p> <p>Since 2018, funding amounts for the primary provincial support program for seniors lodges (Lodge Assistance Program) have stagnated at \$18.5 million. This has resulted in inflationary pressures and increasing capital and maintenance costs as lodges age, most of which are being passed on to municipalities through increased requisitions. Much like the FCSS issue above, this results in municipalities having no choice but to reduce service levels in other areas or defer capital projects to support seniors housing in their communities beyond their mandated share.</p>	<p>Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services</p>
<p>Restructure the Affordable Housing Partnership Program funding model to better balance provincial and municipal commitments, and invest in the development of modular engineering designs for affordable housing facilities.</p>	<p>While the Affordable Housing Partnership Program (AHPP) is highly valuable to supporting the development of affordable housing across Alberta, the current AHPP structure requires municipalities to make significant financial investments to a project before grant funding is confirmed. This not only increases fiscal pressure on municipalities, it also creates community expectations for project development prior to funding being confirmed. This impacts strategic planning and places the municipality in a difficult position if provincial funding is not approved.</p> <p>Budget 2024 should invest additional funds into the AHPP to support applicants in absorbing upfront design and engineering costs of projects after an initial pre-approval. This would increase the likelihood of project success and</p>	<p>Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services</p>

	<p>reduce pressure on municipalities to commit to projects that are not yet fully funded.</p> <p>The province should also invest in the development of standardized designs for modular affordable housing facilities. This would reduce local project costs and ensure that new affordable housing projects feature design elements that key stakeholders deem important. Standardized design approaches to public facilities have a history in Alberta, and investing in this approach for affordable housing will result in significant local and provincial savings in the long-term.</p>	
<p>Restore grants in-lieu-of taxes for housing units operated by public housing management bodies</p>	<p>Public housing management bodies are exempt from paying municipal property taxes. Until 2015, the Government of Alberta provided municipalities with grants in-lieu-of taxes for such units. Since this practice was discontinued, municipalities have lost approximately \$16 million each year. Making up this revenue shortfall has forced municipalities to increase property tax rates for other property types or reduce services. Municipalities already make significant contributions to affordable housing, and restoring grants-in-lieu of taxes would signal an increased commitment on the part of the province.</p>	<p>Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services</p>
<p>Halt the regionalization of victim services and properly fund local victim services agencies.</p>	<p>Victim services is crucial to supporting Albertans in times of great need and vulnerability. For decades, Alberta’s unique locally-governed and volunteer-based victim services model has allowed support to be delivered in a manner that meets local community needs.</p> <p>Despite this, the Government of Alberta has replaced the local model with a regionalized structure under more direct provincial oversight and unclear impacts on frontline service levels. While the issues with this approach are beyond the scope of this submission, the local victim services model has a well-documented history of provincial under-funding, despite having access to a specific funding source (the Victims of Crime Fund). Rather than use revenue from the fund to support victim services (one of its few legislatively-directed purposes), the Government of Alberta allowed the fund to grow a large surplus while local victims service agencies rely heavily on fundraising to remain operational.</p> <p>While some local victim service programs face governance and service delivery struggles, many of these could be solved by a proper provincial investment in the</p>	<p>Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services</p>

	<p>program using funds already available. This would be much less costly than the creation of a completely new model and would allow the province to support enhanced capacity among local service providers that are struggling.</p>	
<p>Invest in local solutions to rural homelessness, mental health, and addictions challenges</p>	<p>In 2022, the Government of Alberta provided nearly \$200 million to help address issues related to homelessness, mental health and addictions in Alberta’s large urban centers. While this funding is warranted, the focus on urban funding reflects a larger challenge faced by rural communities across Alberta: “proving” that they face similar challenges, even though they are often less visible.</p> <p>Due to dispersed populations in rural areas, it is often much more difficult to quantify social issues, and to provide services in a cost-effective manner. As a result, many rural Albertans struggling with these issues either “fall through the cracks” or require rural service providers (such as FCSS) to offer supports outside of their mandates.</p> <p>Providing rural communities with one-time funding similar to that allocated to large cities in 2022 would be transformative; it would allow rural municipalities and non-profits to build capacity and conduct research to better understand where needs exist. Such funding should be allocated based on priorities determined through collaboration between the province and rural municipalities and non-profits.</p>	<p>Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services</p>

Why it is important

Living in a rural community has many rewards, but also many challenges. While it is a fact of life that some services will be less accessible in rural areas than in urban areas, rural Albertans deserve to know that supports will be available in times of need. This is not only important to those already in rural communities, but is also linked to attracting new rural investment.

4. Rural Health, Emergency, and Disaster Services: Safe and Caring Communities

The presence of hospitals, primary care facilities and emergency services in rural communities provides more than just health benefits. These services grow communities by attracting new residents, stimulating economic growth and providing opportunities to educate the new generation of health care professionals.

Despite this, accessing quality health care in rural Alberta presents challenges to both municipalities and residents. These challenges stem from lack of funding, retention and recruitment of healthcare professionals, as well as a healthcare system not designed for rural communities.

Similarly, rural EMS has been drastically insufficient in recent years under the current model. Wait times for ambulance services have increased in rural and remote communities, which compromises access to care for rural Albertans. Although the recommendations made by the [Alberta EMS Advisory Committee](#) have promise, much work and investment is required to implement them.

RMA is cautiously optimistic that the bold provincial proposal to restructure health care service delivery around four pillars, with increased regional decision-making, will lead to improved healthcare outcomes in rural Alberta. However, regardless of governance and administrative structures, adequate resourcing is the key determining factor in whether rural Albertans can access quality health and emergency services.

It is also important to consider that rural municipalities play a major role in providing health care in a variety of ways that meet local needs. Examples include municipal ownership of clinic facilities, municipal firefighters serving as medical first responders, municipal incentives to recruit and retain health care professionals, and many others. For this reason, health and emergency services are not only a rural community issue; they are a rural municipal issue.

In addition to healthcare and EMS, provincewide wildfires in 2024 exposed the vulnerabilities and gaps in the province’s disaster response and recovery systems. Budget 2025 is an opportunity for the Government of Alberta to demonstrate their commitment to being a leader in protecting Alberta residents and industries from disaster risk through adequate resources and capacity.

Action items

Action item	Importance	Lead Ministry(ies)
Provide compensation to municipalities for providing Medical First Responder (MFR) services	<p>In many rural communities, ambulance coverage is limited. As a result, municipal firefighters (including volunteers in some cases) often respond to health events or accidents to assist victims before an ambulance arrives. This response requires special training and an MFR designation, which requires significant investments on the part of municipalities.</p> <p>As municipal MFRs fill gaps created by poor rural EMS coverage, the current lack of provincial support is essentially a download. Providing compensation for instances in which municipal MFRs assist ambulance</p>	Alberta Health

	<p>responses would not only be fairer to municipalities, it would also encourage more municipalities to invest in MFR designations, enhancing community safety across Alberta.</p>	
<p>Prioritize a long-term commitment to the Rural Health Action Plan</p>	<p>The Rural Health Action Plan 2024-2027 is an important step to prioritizing health care in rural Alberta. A commitment to long-term sustainable funding to accelerate the implementation of this plan will ensure that those in rural communities have equitable access to care.</p>	<p>Alberta Health</p>
<p>Develop a grant for municipalities to offset costs of responding to emergencies on Crown land</p>	<p>Many rural municipalities have significant Crown land within their boundaries, including provincial parks and recreation areas. Rural municipalities frequently respond to calls for emergency assistance on Crown lands, which results in significant costs. Despite this, municipalities receive no share of revenues generated from Crown lands, including for recreational use. Developing a grant to provide municipalities with compensation to offset Crown land emergency response costs would better reflect the important role of local first responders in supporting safe recreational experiences.</p>	<p>Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services</p>
<p>Enhance funding for homecare to allow both urban and rural Albertans to age in their homes and communities</p>	<p>While Alberta’s overall population is among the youngest in Canada, rural Alberta’s population is aging, resulting in an increased need for both home- and facility-based seniors care in rural communities.</p> <p>RMA members have identified challenges with funding for homecare, as provincial spending in this area has not kept pace with inflation and population growth in recent years.</p> <p>With required care spaces expected to nearly double between 2020 and 2030 (based on a 2021 MNP report), ensuring as many care recipients as possible remain in their homes will provide long-term financial benefits to the province and municipalities.</p>	<p>Alberta Health, Alberta Seniors, Community and Housing</p>
<p>Implement an operational funding model for the provision of hospice care</p>	<p>While the Government of Alberta has expended significant funding and effort into improving hospice care in the form of a four-year, \$20 million commitment to transitioning from hospital- to community-based care between 2018 and 2022, local hospice societies now face more responsibility without subsequent increases in operational funding. To ensure that the work undertaken by government and stakeholders results in a sustainable home-based hospice care model, the Government of</p>	<p>Alberta Health, Alberta Seniors, Community and Housing</p>

	Alberta must commit to operational funding for non-profit hospice care societies.	
Reverse changes to require municipalities to absorb 10% of Disaster Recovery Program (DRP) costs	<p>In 2021, the Government of Alberta introduced a 90/10 provincial/municipal cost share for claims made under the DRP. DRP funding is used to offset sudden and significant costs incurred by municipalities related to responding to natural disasters. As the occurrence and severity of disasters are impossible to predict, municipalities often face extreme costs well beyond their internal budgets. In response to the 2024 provincewide wildfires, several municipalities faced DRP-eligible response costs in excess of \$10 million.</p> <p>For municipalities, an unexpected expense of \$1 million or more (as is the case under the current DRP cost-share structure) is extremely impactful and would divert local revenues from existing services, planned infrastructure investments, or even from planned disaster mitigation and recovery initiatives.</p> <p>Municipalities are not responsible for where or when disasters occur and should not be expected to absorb response costs, when many simply lack the capacity to do so.</p>	Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services
Enhance investments in wildfire response capacity including training, communications, and mapping data for municipalities responding to wildfires outside the Forest Protection Area (FPA)	RMA formed a working group to study recommendations to manage wildfires outside of the Forest Protection Area (FPA). The recommendations will be shared in a separate submission, but in the meantime RMA is calling for funding to be made available to non-FPA municipalities to support wildfire training, communications, and mapping data.	Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services

Why it is important

All Albertans deserve a safe and healthy community. While living in rural Alberta poses unique challenges, there are many areas, including those above, in which enhanced provincial investments could make a tremendous difference in how rural Albertans access health services, and their safety in times of accident, emergency, or disaster.