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Resolution 1-25S

Requirement for Municipal Consultation Prior to Registration of Conservation Easement

MD of Willow Creek

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Protected Areas

WHEREAS the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* authorizes the creation of a conservation easement for purposes outlined in Section 29 of the Act; and

WHEREAS a conservation easement registers a permanent interest in land by a qualified organization which permanently limits the use of the land that is subject to the easement; and

WHEREAS pursuant to the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*, municipal councils are to receive a notification of planned conservation easements prior to registration; and

WHEREAS registrants are not required to undertake any prior notification, negotiation or consultation with the municipality regarding the current state, planned maintenance or future requirements of transportation infrastructure affected by the conservation easement including roads, culverts or local road bridges; and

WHEREAS the purchase of conservation easements is partially funded by the Government of Alberta; and

WHEREAS pursuant to the *Municipal Government Act*, the title to all roads in a municipality are vested in the Crown in Right of Alberta; and

WHEREAS pursuant to the *Municipal Government Act*, a municipality has the direction, control and management of all roads within the municipality; and

WHEREAS in the absence of consultation with municipalities, many matters concerning existing roads, culverts and bridges are not addressed including unregistered accesses and historical roads, planned infrastructure development and maintenance requiring additional right of way or temporary workspace; and

WHEREAS this lack of consultation often results in municipalities being required to undertake a process of expropriation to complete public infrastructure projects, many of which are funded by the Government of Alberta; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to amend the Conservation Easement Registration Regulation to require qualified organizations to conduct a consultation with municipalities for the purpose of examining potential impacts to municipal infrastructure arising from the registration of a conservation easement.

Member Background

Part 3 Division 2 of the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* authorizes the establishment of a conservation easement by ‘qualified organization’ for several reasons including protection, conservation and enhancement for the purpose of protecting, conserving and enhancing the environment, for scenic or esthetic values; for agricultural purposes; for recreation uses, open space use, environmental education use or for research and scientific studies of natural ecosystems.

Conservation easements register an interest in land by a qualified organization to authorize or limit and restrict certain uses. Conservation easements for conservation purposes are highly restrictive and do not permit any land disturbance including road widening, backsloping or temporary workspace agreements for the construction or rehabilitation of roads, culverts and local road bridges.

Any road work planned by a municipality would require the municipality to undertake an expropriation of the land, a costly and time-consuming process.

Additionally, there are many ranches that are currently utilizing easements or even historical roads which are unregistered that cross titled land. Under the present system used by organizations including the Nature Conservancy of Canada, conservation easements are taken on lands with these types of accesses that will prohibit any maintenance on the access roads into adjoining properties without any consultation or consideration of the impact to neighbouring property owners.

As outlined in the Conservation Easement Registration Regulation, municipalities receive notification of conservation easements prior to registration in the form of a document labeled as “Form 1 – Notice Prior to Registration”. This notification is received by municipalities with no prior notification or consultation as none is currently required by the legislation.

RMA Background

7-23S: Revision of the Alberta Land Stewardship Act to provide for an Expiration Date in Conservation Easement Agreements

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.

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

Resolution 4-25S

Re-evaluation of Wetlands Policy to Streamline Road Construction and Improvements in Rural Alberta

County of Warner

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Protected Areas

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has established a Wetland Policy that regulates the management and protection of wetlands, including those that may be affected by road construction and infrastructure improvements; and

WHEREAS the current Wetland Policy can present significant challenges to rural municipalities in Alberta, particularly in the context of road construction and maintenance, where wetland areas may be impacted by road expansion or upgrades, making it difficult for municipalities to provide efficient, cost-effective transportation infrastructure for their ratepayers; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities play a vital role in supporting local economies, facilitating access to services and maintaining transportation networks that ensure safe and reliable travel for residents and businesses ; and

WHEREAS the costs associated with navigating wetland-related regulatory processes and mitigation requirements can impose undue financial burdens on rural municipalities, potentially delaying projects and creating barriers to maintaining and improving essential road networks; and

WHEREAS the need for responsible land-use planning, conservation, and sustainable infrastructure development must be balanced with the practical realities of road construction and improvement in rural municipalities, which are often located in regions with a significant number of wetlands that may not be easily avoided in road planning; and

WHEREAS rural municipalities must be able to continue to provide necessary road infrastructure to ratepayers without being hampered by regulations that disproportionately impact smaller, resource-constrained municipalities; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to amend the Wetland Policy to streamline regulatory processes for rural municipalities in relation to road construction and improvements;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the amendments to the Wetland Policy address the unique challenges faced by rural communities when determining wetland mitigation measures and introduce alternative approaches to minimizing costs by ensuring that road construction and maintenance projects are not unduly delayed or hindered by overly restrictive policies.

Member Background

The Wetland Policy, implemented in 2013, aims to “provide the strategic direction and tools required to make informed management decisions in the long-term interest of Albertans,” with a focus on minimizing “the loss and degradation of wetlands, while allowing for continued growth and economic development in the province.” At the same time, rural municipalities manage a significant amount of

Alberta's public infrastructure, providing construction and maintenance as needed to support communities and providing access to industries such as agriculture, energy, and forestry. This role accounts for a significant amount of the budget for many of the rural municipalities, and Albertan rural municipalities are facing the reckoning of a combined infrastructure deficit estimated to be \$17.25 billion across all asset types, including \$11.99 billion in road infrastructure deficit and \$2.29 billion in bridge infrastructure deficit. Maintaining the infrastructure is becoming increasingly challenging due to increasing costs of materials, contractors, and regulations.

Within the existing Wetland Policy, there is no consideration for whether approving maintenance to an existing road would prevent impacts to the wetland from further degradation such as geologic slumping. Addressing maintenance in a timely manner would prevent deficits building up, which if left unaddressed for longer periods of time will require larger projects to fix due to the increased scope and added costs which counteracts the Wetland Policy expectation of minimizing effect on wetlands.

The Wetland Policy requires the identification of wetlands before the start of any project, whether a new road construction, road expansion, or road maintenance. The wetlands map available as part of the provincial data to identify wetlands is comprised of outdated and incomplete data, which can create unnecessary red tape and costs for projects when it identifies areas as wetlands which are no longer in existence. The current process for wetland replacement is also often disproportionately difficult for smaller, resource-strained municipalities due to the costly requirements for recontouring, planning of hydrology, weeding and planting appropriate species, and incorporating wildlife and human use features. Meeting these requirements for wetlands that no longer exist is unsustainable and leaves many municipalities with no choice but to pay the wetland replacement fee. This contributes to a fund from which few municipalities will see local benefits, particularly considering that out of the \$5 million paid out in 2024-25, Ducks Unlimited Canada received over \$3.5 million in funding for only three projects.

Road infrastructure is a benefit to all living, working, and traveling in the province and this benefit should allow for a streamlined approval process for municipalities engaging in routine maintenance and construction activities for roads that reflects the critical role of municipal infrastructure, limited financial resources, and relatively low impact of these activities.

RMA Background

13-22F: Enhanced Wetland Replacement Program

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.

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

Resolution 5-25S

Rural Participation on the Integration Council for Refocusing Alberta's Health Care System

Athabasca County

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Health

WHEREAS on November 8, 2023, the Government of Alberta announced the “Refocusing Alberta's Health Care System Initiative” to improve health outcomes and empower health care workers to deliver quality care across the province; and

WHEREAS Ministerial Order 300/2024 established the Integration Council and its terms of reference; and

WHEREAS the terms of reference states that the Integration Council will be chaired by the Minister of Health, with support from the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction, the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services, and will have members from each new sector-specific provincial health agency; and

WHEREAS in October 2024, the Government of Alberta released the Rural Health Action Plan 2024-2027 which states that “The discrepancies between the health care available to Albertans in and around urban centres and those who live in more rural and remote communities has been a growing concern for many years. These communities face unique health care challenges that call for creative solutions that create more equitable access to health care that they want and deserve;”

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Alberta immediately appoint a separate and dedicated rural generalist as a voting member to the Health System Integration Council and within the new health board leadership structure to ensure that rural Albertans have an appropriate and continuous voice for their health care.

Member Background

Rural Albertans face healthcare challenges that are distinct from those faced by urban regions, including limited access to specialists, lengthy travel times for care, and fewer resources to address mental health, continuing care, and addiction services. Additionally, key decision-making bodies lack adequate rural representation which perpetuates systemic inefficiencies and disparities in care for rural communities while failing to acknowledge the distinct needs of rural patients.

The province's shift to a new integrated healthcare system—organized into four divisions: Primary Care, Acute Care, Continuing Care, and Mental Health and Addictions—offers an opportunity to address these issues. However, the current structure of the Integration Council does not include a designated rural generalist who can provide critical insight into the realities of rural healthcare.

RMA members have been advocating that the Government of Alberta consider the “rural lens” before making all decisions.

The Integration Council's purpose, as defined by M.O 300/2024 is:

- ♦ Identify means of integration of a single functioning health care system at the highest level of governance
- ♦ Identify means of integration of the four new organizations
- ♦ Identify efficiencies and means to remove barriers to the health system integration and to the patient journey
- ♦ Monitor key outcomes of the Refocus initiative and support public reporting on performance of the health system related to the Refocus initiative so Albertans know if their health system is delivering better health outcomes for Albertans.
- ♦ Identify deliberate change management strategies throughout the health system to support the Refocus initiative.

The current structure of this committee is listed below:

VOTING MEMBERS	NON-VOTING MEMBERS
Minister Health	Minister Technology and Innovation
Minister Mental Health	Deputy Minister Technology and Innovation
Minister Seniors, Community and Social Services	Chair Health Quality Council Board
Deputy Minister Health	CEO Health Quality Council
Deputy Minister Mental Health	CEO Canadian Center Recovery Excellence
Deputy Minister Seniors, Community and Social Services	
Chair Alberta Health Services Board	
CEO Recovery Alberta	
CEO Primary Care Alberta	
Managing Director Procurement and Optimization (Health)	

A rural presence on the Integration Council and the new Health Care Leadership Board would provide an invaluable perspective on the challenges faced by rural patients, from effective communication in referrals to navigating broader social determinants of health. It is crucial that rural communities, which often rely heavily on team-based care models, have a voice in shaping healthcare policies and systems that affect them. Appointing a dedicated rural generalist to the Integration Council and new Health Care Leadership Board will help ensure that Alberta's healthcare system delivers equitable and effective care for all Albertans, regardless of geography.

[hlth-refocusing-albertas-health-care-session-handout.pdf](#)

[Rural health action plan 2024-2027 - Open Government](#)

M.O. 300/2024 - Health

RMA Background

1-24F: Attraction and Retention Strategy for Rural Health Care Professionals

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate for the Government of Alberta to urgently prioritize a commitment to long-term sustainable funding to accelerate implementation of the Rural Health Action Plan 2024-2027 and the work of the Rural Health Professions Action Plan that focuses on increasing the total number of health care professionals in rural and remote Alberta.

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

Resolution 8-25S

Opposition to *Water Act* Amendments and Lack of Consultation

Northern Sunrise County

Carried as amended

Advocacy Target: Alberta Environment and Protected Areas

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta is considering amendments to the *Water Act* that could potentially allow for easier transfer of water between basins throughout the province; and

WHEREAS the southern regions of Alberta have faced reoccurring drought conditions in recent years and a significant amount of the province's water resources are already allocated; and

WHEREAS the proposed *Water Act* amendments may enable water transfers to be approved at the bureaucratic level without requiring Cabinet approval, which raises concerns about accountability and transparency in water management decisions; and

WHEREAS municipalities are concerned that water transfers could have significant environmental and economic impacts, including the depletion of northern water resources and the disruption of natural water cycles; and

WHEREAS it is essential to prioritize water conservation efforts and resource management in the southern region where water usage is high, before considering inter-basin water transfers; and

WHEREAS a province-wide water management plan should include interprovincial water agreements with British Columbia; and

WHEREAS the questions being asked to the public in the recent water engagement surveys raise concerns about the transfer of water between basins, the collection of rainwater and the associated costs;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) opposes amendments to the *Water Act* that would reduce approval requirements for the transfer of water between basins without thorough consultation with municipalities;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate to the Government of Alberta (GOA) to halt any decisions related to water management until proper consultation with the public and municipalities is conducted;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate to the (GOA) to collect sufficient data to inform proper "rainwater" and "usage" definitions in the *Water Act*, and to better determine Alberta's water availability;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate to the (GOA) to prioritize more water storage capacity in regions with low water availability before considering inter-basin water transfer initiatives;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate to the GOA to provide full transparency and public engagement opportunities regarding any proposed changes to the *Water Act*.

Member Background

The Government of Alberta is currently considering amendments to the *Water Act* that would allow for inter-basin transfers of water without the oversight of Cabinet, public participation or Indigenous consultation. This raises significant concerns about transparency and accountability in water management decisions being made by the province. Currently, the *Water Act* lacks clear definitions or criteria for what constitutes a water-related emergency, as well as the conditions required to justify water transfers. The vague language in the Act grants considerable discretion to director-level decision-makers .

Water management, governance, and allocation in northern Alberta have remained limited compared to other regions of the province. Before considering amendments to the *Water Act* to ease water transfers in Alberta, the provincial government needs to conduct a thorough assessment of the potential environmental and economic implications of the transferring of water, including the effects it would have on ecosystems, communities, and existing water systems across the province.

The proposed amendments have the potential to deplete water sources, permanently disrupt ecosystems, and alter water cycles. This is even more concerning if the government is focused on developing alternative water sources, such as the collection of rainwater without fully considering the broader implications of these measures.

The province must also prioritize quantifying Alberta's overall water supply before moving forward with policies that re-allocate water between regions. As an upstream jurisdiction, British Columbia has considerable control over water flowing into Alberta, particularly the Peace River. Without proper interprovincial water agreements in place, the Alberta government risks enacting legislation that will transfer water without fully understanding the availability of this resource.

Despite the Government of Alberta engaging the public on water management from October 31, 2024 to January 24, 2025 and the announcement of a 3-year, \$4 million study to fully map groundwater in southern Alberta, significantly more consultation and due diligence is needed. Municipalities, Indigenous communities, and other key stakeholders must be meaningfully involved in these discussions.

Additionally, water efficiency measures and sustainable water practices need to be implemented in the southern regions of the province before any consideration is given to inter-basin water transfers as such actions would have lasting, detrimental effects on local economies and ecosystems across the province – especially in the absence of any thorough environmental impact assessments being done to fully understand the long-term consequences of diverting water from Alberta's northern regions.

RMA Background

7-24F: Improved Water License Approval and Compliance Processes

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta (GOA) to develop alternatives to the use of fresh water for hydraulic fracking;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the GOA require the oil and gas industry to reduce water use proportional to all other users if drought restrictions are implemented;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that that the GOA amend the Responsible Energy Development Act to remove from the mandate of the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) “to consider and decide applications and other matters under the Water Act in respect of energy resource activities” to ensure that all authority for granting water licenses falls to Alberta Environment and Protected Areas and that the AER continue to be responsible for industry compliance;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that that the GOA, without exception, require all Temporary Diversion License (TDL) applications, including those diversions from alluvial aquifers, follow the process outlined in legislation, policy and directives and that the information on which the approving authority has used to issue the TDL be made available to the public.

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

Resolution 9-25S

Water and Wastewater System Funding

County of St. Paul

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta supports rural sustainability and quality of life through various programs; and

WHEREAS water and wastewater distribution systems in Alberta require repair and replacement to ensure the health and safety of residents; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta's 2024 budget only included minimal funding for new water and wastewater systems, not funding for the repair and replacement of existing systems; and

WHEREAS many municipalities struggle to fund the necessary repairs to existing water and wastewater systems, thus making costs for residents unaffordable; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate for the Government of Alberta to restore Water for Life Program (WFLP) funding levels and expand WFLP eligibility to include water and wastewater distribution system replacements and maintenance.

Member Background

The County of St. Paul Regional Water System provides municipal water and wastewater services to the hamlets of Ashmont, Mallaig, and Lottie Lake. Each hamlet has a water distribution system, with Mallaig and Ashmont having wastewater collection systems and lagoons. Today, that infrastructure is reaching its end of useful life, causing various issues that are costly to fix.

The County has spent more than \$375,000 on professional, legal, and engineering services to develop a detailed infrastructure replacement plan, outlining a phasing and funding strategy. The estimated cost for this plan in 2021 was \$23 million (or \$1.6 million per year to service the debt if the County borrowed the amount). This estimate has likely since increased with inflation.

For the estimate currently on hand, the County has determined that 45% of the costs will be funded through tax revenue, reserves, and utility rates designed to cover the full cost of water distribution and wastewater collection systems.

Without provincial support, the 300 properties in these hamlets are left to cover the remaining 55%, paying approximately \$3,000 per year for 30 years. This is almost double their current annual property taxes, meaning they will be paying three times more than their current taxes. This is not sustainable nor feasible to expect these communities to take on these costs.

The County of St. Paul is not the only municipality facing these issues, as many rural and small urban municipalities have similar infrastructure issues and costs with declining populations. RMA used municipal data and surveys on water utilities to prepare a portfolio on the lifespan and health of this infrastructure, which showed that the funding needed to bring rural municipal infrastructure to a manageable and cost-effective state is \$2.96 billion more than municipalities currently have access to.

RMA Background

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 10-25S

Provincial Assistance for Fire Apparatus Replacement in Alberta

MD of Smoky River

Carried as amended

Advocacy Target: Alberta Municipal Affairs, Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services

WHEREAS fire departments in Alberta play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of communities by providing vital fire protection and emergency response services; and

WHEREAS fire apparatus (fire trucks, engines, and other firefighting vehicles) are essential tools for first responders, but have a finite operational lifespan; and

WHEREAS as fire apparatus reach the end of their service life, the risk of failure and inadequate response increases, compromising the safety of Albertans; and

WHEREAS many municipalities and rural communities across Alberta face significant financial challenges when it comes to replacing aging fire apparatus, often relying on limited budgets that cannot keep up with the rising costs of purchasing new equipment; and

WHEREAS maintaining a modern and fully operational fire apparatus fleet is essential for ensuring the readiness of fire services to respond to fires, medical emergencies, hazardous materials incidents, and other disasters that may occur in the province; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has a long-standing commitment to supporting public safety and emergency preparedness throughout the province;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta (GOA) to work with municipalities, fire departments, and industry stakeholders to establish a provincial funding program to assist municipalities and rural communities in replacing fire apparatus once they reach the end of their operational life;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the program include criteria to prioritize funding for high-risk and underserved areas, ensuring that communities most in need of fire apparatus replacement receive support in a timely manner;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the program provide options for municipalities to access both direct grants and low-interest loans to help with the financial burden of replacing essential firefighting equipment;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the program offer technical and logistical support to municipalities to ensure that fire departments can effectively evaluate, purchase, and implement replacement apparatus in a cost-efficient and sustainable manner;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the GOA review and monitor the effectiveness of the program regularly, ensuring that it remains responsive to the evolving needs of Alberta's fire services and continues to enhance the safety and well-being of all residents;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the GOA allocate a portion of the budget each fiscal year for this initiative, ensuring consistent and ongoing support for fire apparatus replacement across the province.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA advocate to have the arbitrary years of service requirements put on fire apparatus removed and move to a tactical and maintenance-based solution for fire apparatus operational life.

Member Background

To assist municipalities and rural communities in replacing fire apparatus that have reached the end of their operational life (20-30 years), this resolution calls for the implementation of a program that will:

- ♦ Prioritize funding for high-risk and underserved areas.
- ♦ Offer direct grants and low-interest loans to alleviate financial burdens.
- ♦ Provide technical and logistical support for purchasing and implementing new equipment.
- ♦ Ensure regular reviews of the program's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments to meet evolving needs.
- ♦ Allocate a portion of the provincial budget annually to sustain this initiative.

This resolution recognizes the unique needs of rural municipalities and the strain that current policies and financial burdens place on essential public safety infrastructure. Supporting this resolution aligns with broader efforts to ensure adequate fire protection and safety in rural Alberta, which may lead to long-term financial benefits through effective resource allocation and cost-efficiency improvements. When an apparatus is past its expiration date, it may set the municipality into an “unprotected” status according to the Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS), potentially increasing every resident’s insurance rates significantly. Fulfilling the requests of this resolution will support the efforts of rural municipalities in addressing the financial and operational challenges related to fire apparatuses. It will help ensure that fire departments can maintain an effective fleet without compromising safety or financial stability, benefiting both public safety and community well-being.

- ♦ Fire apparatuses are crucial for public safety and emergency response in Alberta.
- ♦ Many municipalities, particularly rural ones, face significant financial constraints surrounding the replacement of aging fire apparatuses.
- ♦ A modern and well-maintained fleet is essential for ensuring readiness and response capabilities in fire, medical, and disaster emergencies.

The federal Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP), which was established in 1980 and ended in 2015, provided funding to enhance the national capacity to respond to all types of emergencies and to enhance resiliency of critical infrastructure. Several other provinces offer funding for emergency equipment and vehicles. An example currently exists in Newfoundland and Labrador:

(Jan. 2025, Newfoundland and Labrador — Applications are now being accepted for Newfoundland and Labrador’s 2025-26 Fire Protection Vehicle and Equipment Funding Programs for municipalities and local service districts (LSD) across the province.

<https://www.cdnfirefighter.com/applications-open-for-n-l-fire-protection-vehicle-and-equipment-funding-programs/?custnum=1101741652&title=Canadian%20Firefighter%20Insider:%20Your%20weekly%20ne>

[ws%20source&utm_source=CFF&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ANXCD250117016&oly_enc_id=8464C0016034E2S\)](#)

RMA Background

7-23F: Strategy for Management of Wildland Fires Outside Forest Protection Area

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) engage with the Government of Alberta (GOA), Alberta Municipalities (ABmunis), and the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) to develop a long-term strategy for the resourcing and management of wildland fire events outside the Forest Protection Area (FPA); and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA collaborate with ABmunis, the AFCA, and the GOA to establish a working group consisting of municipal and provincial subject matter experts, elected officials, and senior municipal administrators to develop a long-term strategy for wildfire management outside the FPA; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT the RMA advocate that the GOA allocate additional funding to train more rotary wing pilots in bucketing and strategically place these bucketing resources inside and outside the FPA.

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

1-24S: Declining Fire Department Services Across Rural Alberta

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate to the Government of Alberta to collaborate with the Government of Canada and Fire Underwriters Survey to assist municipalities to retain fire services by recruiting firefighters and addressing the declining fire department services across rural Alberta.

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

Resolution 11-25S

Opposition to the *Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act*

County of Newell

Carried

Advocacy Target: Alberta Energy and Minerals, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Canada Energy and Natural Resources, Canada Environment and Climate Change

WHEREAS the Government of Canada has enacted the *Canadian Net Zero Emissions Accountability Act*, which aims to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 through policies primarily focused on minimizing carbon emissions; and

WHEREAS the implementation of net-zero policies has introduced measures that disproportionately impact key industries in Alberta, including agriculture and oil and gas, thereby creating economic challenges for these sectors; and

WHEREAS carbon dioxide comprises only 0.04% of the atmosphere and is a critical element for sustaining life, serving as a fundamental resource for photosynthesis and ecological balance; and

WHEREAS elevated levels of carbon dioxide have been shown to enhance plant growth, improve agricultural yields, and contribute to reducing global food insecurity by fostering more robust crop production;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) urge the governments of Alberta and Canada to enact policies that reflect the beneficial role of carbon dioxide in supporting ecosystems and agricultural productivity, in recognition that carbon dioxide is a vital component of the Earth's natural systems, essential for sustaining life;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT the RMA advocate for the withdrawal of the *Canadian Net Zero Emissions Accountability Act*, promoting instead a balanced approach to environmental stewardship that acknowledges the complex interactions of carbon cycles and their contributions to societal well-being.

Member Background

The *Canadian Net Zero Emissions Accountability Act*, aiming for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, has been analyzed by institutions such as the C.D. Howe Institute and Deloitte. Their findings suggest several potential economic impacts:

1. **Significant Economic Costs:** Achieving net-zero emissions could cost up to \$2 trillion by 2050, nearly three-quarters of Canada's 2021 GDP.¹

¹ See <https://www.cdhowe.org/expert-op-eds/reducing-emissions-will-cost-governments-need-admit-financial-post>

2. **Job Losses:** Production cuts in the oil and gas sector could result in approximately 90,000 job losses between 2030 and 2040.²
3. **Increased Energy Costs:** Transitioning to renewable energy sources may raise system costs due to the need for energy storage solutions, impacting both consumers and businesses.³
4. **Competitiveness Concerns:** Stringent emissions targets may hinder Canada's competitiveness, especially in energy-intensive industries, by imposing higher operational costs.⁴

Increased atmospheric carbon dioxide offers several benefits, particularly in enhancing plant growth, agricultural productivity, and global food security. Lal (2004)⁵ highlights that elevated CO₂ can bolster soil carbon sequestration, improving soil health and agricultural resilience while mitigating food insecurity. Donohue et al. (2013)⁶ find that a "CO₂ fertilization effect" has caused a gradual greening around the globe. Collectively, these studies underscore the role of CO₂ in supporting ecosystems, improving agricultural yields, and addressing global environmental challenges.

ATTACHMENT: Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, S.C. 2021, c. 22

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-19.3/fulltext.html>

RMA Background

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

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) conduct a rural impact analysis on the federal carbon pollution pricing system to determine how the system is negatively impacting rural Albertans and rural municipalities and share the analysis with the governments of Alberta and Canada; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA advocate to the Government of Canada for the amendment to the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act to halt carbon tax increases on fuel.

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

ER3-24S: Opposition to Federal Zero Emission Vehicle Mandate

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) register its opposition to the federal zero emission vehicle (ZEV) mandate in its current form;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the RMA advocate to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and to the Government of Canada (GOC) to reconsider and revise the ZEV mandate to

² See <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/canada-oil-gas-emissions-cap-likely-curtail-production-report-says-2024-06-18/>

³ See <https://www.cdhowe.org/public-policy-research/power-when-you-need-it-case-small-nuclear-reactors>

⁴ See <https://www.cdhowe.org/intelligence-memos/ben-brunnen-energy-scenarios-shouldnt-drive-policy-especially-canada>

⁵ See <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.1097396>

⁶ See <https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/grl.50563>

address the unique challenges faced by rural communities and develop a more flexible, market-based approach that removes the 100 percent ZEV requirement.

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

5-22F: Fertilizer Emission Reduction Target Impacts

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.

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

Resolution 12-25S

Enabling Service of Offence Notices for Bylaw Matters via Ordinary Mail

Lacombe County

Carried

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

WHEREAS rural municipalities are responsible for enforcing a wide range of municipal bylaws, including those related to property maintenance, snow removal, grass cutting, and animal control, to ensure community standards, safety, and well-being; and

WHEREAS the *Provincial Offences Procedure Act* (POPA) currently requires personal service of offence notices for municipal bylaw contraventions, except in specific instances such as parking violations or offences designated by the Minister under section 31(5)(c); and

WHEREAS personal service of offence notices pose challenges in rural municipalities due to the frequent unavailability of property owners or animal owners, absentee landlords, non-local individuals, or transient pet owners, resulting in inefficiencies and delays in enforcement; and

WHEREAS this personal service requirement creates unnecessary administrative burdens and costs for municipalities, constituting a form of red tape that reduces the effectiveness of bylaw enforcement and impedes timely resolution of community concerns; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has committed to cutting red tape to improve services, reduce burdens, and save time and resources for municipalities and citizens;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to amend the *Provincial Offences Procedure Act* (POPA) to:

1. Expand the use of ordinary mail as a means of serving offence notices under POPA;
2. Designate specific classes of municipal bylaw offences, including those related to property maintenance, snow removal, grass cutting, and animal control, as eligible for service by ordinary mail under section 31(5)(c) of POPA; and
3. Allow municipalities to authorize service by ordinary mail in their bylaws, provided reliable address records are available through sources such as the Registrar of Motor Vehicle Services.

Member Background

Rural municipalities face unique challenges in enforcing bylaws across large geographic areas with sparse populations. The current requirement for personal service of offence notices under POPA results in unnecessary administrative delays, increased enforcement costs, and reduced compliance, particularly when dealing with:

- ♦ Absentee landlords or non-local property owners for property maintenance, snow removal, and grass cutting offences.
- ♦ Transient or non-local animal owners for animal control violations.

These barriers constitute red tape, creating inefficiencies and preventing municipalities from focusing their resources on improving community standards and public safety.

Amending POPA to allow for service of offence notices via ordinary mail rather than in person for designated bylaw offences aligns with Alberta's Red Tape Reduction Strategy by:

- ♦ Streamlining administrative processes for municipalities;
- ♦ Reducing enforcement costs and resource requirements;
- ♦ Improving compliance rates through timely and efficient notice delivery.

This resolution supports Alberta's commitment to cutting red tape, empowering municipalities, and improving enforcement of bylaws related to property maintenance, snow removal, grass cutting, and animal control.

RMA Background

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 14-25S

Public Interest Oil and Gas Company

County of Stettler

Carried

Advocacy Target: Rural Municipalities of Alberta

WHEREAS Alberta's rural municipalities depend on property tax revenue to support the construction and maintenance of infrastructure and the provision of municipal services; and

WHEREAS property taxes remain the main source of revenue for municipalities, as provincial and federal transfers are diminishing, while the downloading and offloading of services and programs continues; and

WHEREAS the current legislation has limited the recourse available to a municipality to recover tax arrears owed by oil and gas companies, which predominantly arise from linear property, commercial property, and education requisitions; and

WHEREAS Alberta's rural municipalities host and support infrastructure to most of the province's oil and gas exploration and production activity; and

WHEREAS the ability of municipalities to recover tax arrears with respect to oil and gas properties is compromised because of significant unfunded abandonment and reclamation costs that are a first-ranking charge in favour of the Alberta Energy Regulator; and

WHEREAS insolvency of an oil and gas company often results in productive assets being taken out of service;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta investigate the possibility of forming a public interest-focused subsidiary oil and gas company to acquire and operate productive assets owned by insolvent companies to stabilize the receipt of linear taxation revenue and prevent the premature retirement of productive assets.

Member Background

In recent years, unpaid property taxes on oil and gas properties have been a persistent concern for rural municipalities, resulting in lost revenue. Although the province's economic climate has improved, delinquent oil and gas operators still owe municipalities significant outstanding property taxes. These financially unstable companies are leading not only to lost tax revenue, but also permanently lost assessment base.

Oil and gas assets belonging to insolvent companies are often hastily abandoned at the appointment of a receiver, with many then becoming orphaned wells permanently. The looming threat of abandoned assets, and little chance of recovering substantial taxes through insolvency proceedings, have led municipalities to have little incentive to push marginal companies to repay arrears.

An oil and gas company operating in the public interest, for the purpose of stabilizing assets, could significantly lower the impact of non-operating companies and introduce the possibility of assets being operated through insolvencies.

By the numbers

While most companies in Alberta's energy sector fulfill their local tax obligations, some, especially those facing potential insolvency, have not, forcing municipalities to make difficult choices between raising taxes to other taxpayers or reducing essential services.

Municipalities have reported a cumulative \$220 million in unpaid taxes, with \$130 million in tax arrears and the remaining \$90 million in cancellations. Most of these taxes will not be recoverable because they are owed by defunct companies, already written off by municipalities, or both.

A smaller but significant portion of unpaid taxes, approximately \$76 million, is owed by companies still operating and is potentially recoverable, including through repayment agreements.

Municipalities have reported having repayment agreements in place to collect \$48 million in unpaid taxes. Municipalities could potentially recoup another \$28 million from still-in-operation companies. (Government of Alberta, 2022)

RMA and Alberta Municipal Affairs both launched unpaid oil and gas property tax surveys, inviting municipalities to provide detailed information on tax arrears, write-offs, operational impacts, and companies responsible. Final responses for the Municipal Affairs survey were received at the end of September 2022, with 55 of the 71 rural municipalities responding to the information request and 52 having unpaid tax data to report. The current survey results represent information reported to the province by municipalities in fall 2022 and are based on a point in time – December 31, 2021, and prior – with a status that has most likely changed since that date.

Of the amount in arrears, \$54 million belongs to non-operating companies and repayment is not expected. The remaining \$76 million belongs to 99 operating companies, 15 of which are responsible for \$71 million, or 93%. Payment plans or agreements are in place with 25 companies to recoup \$48 million in arrears. This leaves an estimated \$28 million in arrears belonging to operating companies that do not have repayment agreements.

Chart 1 – Summary of Municipal Affairs Unpaid Taxes, September 2022 (\$ millions)

Category	Unpaid Taxes (\$ millions)	Percentage
Cancelled Taxes	\$90	41
Tax arrears, non-operating companies	\$54	24
Tax arrears, operating companies with tax agreements	\$48	22
Tax arrears, operating companies without tax agreements	\$28	13

Source: Government of Alberta

Nineteen responding municipalities reported they have been successful in recovering only a combined \$8 million in owed oil and gas property taxes and penalties.

Eighty-one per cent of reported recoveries were made in 2021 and 2022 and are associated with 44 companies, of which 11 are associated with 95% of recoveries. While tax recovery looks to be improving, the amount will remain a small portion of total unpaid taxes, as most companies with unpaid taxes are no longer operating.

Twenty-eight responding municipalities indicated success in negotiating repayment agreements with 25 oil and gas companies for \$48 million in combined taxes and penalties. Nearly all the reported recoveries and repayment agreements were secured in 2021 and 2022, which likely reflects an improved economic climate.

The Government of Alberta has introduced a special lien and issued directives to the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) to reduce the unpaid oil and gas taxes owed to municipalities. Companies now have to confirm that their unpaid municipal taxes across the province do not exceed the maximum threshold allowed or have a repayment agreement in force when applying for new licences and licence transfers. Companies seeking to sell their assets will also have to pay their back taxes first, or as part of the sale. Unfortunately, municipalities have not seen significant results from these new programs and RMA's advocacy is ongoing in that respect.

In early 2023, the RMA requested all members complete a survey providing an update on their unpaid oil and gas burden as of December 31, 2022. All 69 RMA members responded to the survey.

Survey Results

- ♦ Rural municipalities are currently facing an overall unpaid oil and gas property tax burden of \$268.5 million.
- ♦ This represents a 6.1% increase from the overall amount in the RMA's 2022 member survey, a 9.6% increase from the RMA's 2021 member survey, a 55.2% increase from the RMA's 2020 member survey, and a 231.5% increase from the RMA's 2019 member survey.
- ♦ The average RMA member is facing an unpaid tax burden of \$3,891,285 from the oil and gas industry.
- ♦ 7 municipalities have unpaid tax burdens above \$10 million from the oil and gas industry.
- ♦ 2 municipalities have no unpaid tax burden from the oil and gas industry, and an additional seven municipalities have an unpaid tax burden below \$100,000.
- ♦ Municipalities have written off nearly \$132 million in unpaid taxes since 2015. This means that municipalities consider these taxes uncollectible, and they will never recover this lost revenue.
- ♦ Still-operating companies are responsible for 41% of unpaid taxes from the oil and gas industry.

- ♦ RMA members have tax repayment agreements in place with industry for an additional \$45 million in unpaid taxes. This amount is not reflected in the \$268.5 million overall unpaid property tax burden. (Rural Municipalities of Alberta, 2023)

Additionally, at least twelve Canadian oil and gas producers filed for bankruptcy protection in 2024, up from 5 in 2023 and 3 in 2022 (according to a Financial Post analysis). Among the insolvent companies was Alberta-based Long Run Explorations, which is struggling to pay \$308 million in compliance expenses. (Snyder, 2024)

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Government of Alberta. (2022, September). *Unpaid oil and gas property taxes*. Retrieved from <https://www.alberta.ca/unpaid-oil-and-gas-property-taxes>

Rural Municipalities of Alberta. (2023). *Unpaid Oil and Gas Tax Survey Summary*. Nisku: RMA.

Snyder, J. (2024, December 19). *Oil and gas insolvencies surge to three-year high amid low prices, rising costs*. Retrieved from The Logic Canada's Business and Tech Newsroom: <https://thelogic.co/briefing/oil-and-gas-insolvencies-surge-to-three-year-high-amid-low-prices-rising-costs/>

RMA Background

3-24F: Collection of Unpaid Municipal Property Taxes by Way of Royalties

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate that the Government of Alberta (GOA) require oil and gas developers and operators to pay municipal property taxes on oil and gas properties as a condition of being granted and/or retaining the right to develop oil and natural gas resources;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA advocate to the GOA to collect unpaid oil and gas municipal property taxes on behalf of municipalities through the collection of royalty revenue and distribute them accordingly.

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

Resolution 15-25S

Enhancing Access to Post-Secondary Education for Rural Alberta Students

Wheatland County

Carried

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

WHEREAS participation in post-secondary education is critical to the long-term viability and prosperity of Alberta's rural communities, enabling individuals to contribute meaningfully to economic development, community leadership, and innovation; and

WHEREAS rural Albertans face unique and significant barriers to accessing post-secondary education, including but not limited to financial constraints, geographic isolation, cultural and social challenges, limited access to advanced academic preparation, and inadequate technological infrastructure; and

WHEREAS students from rural communities are an equity-deserving group requiring targeted strategies and tailored support to overcome systemic inequities in education access, including resources for financial aid, academic counselling, mentorship, and reliable high-speed internet; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has identified education and workforce development as critical priorities for sustaining economic growth and diversifying rural economies; and

WHEREAS existing post-secondary pathways insufficiently address the unique needs of rural students, contributing to underrepresentation in advanced education and perpetuating inequities that hinder their full participation in Alberta's prosperity;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocate to the Government of Alberta to provide dedicated funding and commit to the development and ongoing evaluation of a comprehensive Rural Pathway to Post-Secondary Education Strategy that will:

1. Identify barriers impacting equitable rural student access to all post-secondary opportunities;
2. Offer targeted scholarships, bursaries, and financial aid to alleviate the economic burdens faced by rural students.
3. Enhance outreach and support efforts to rural communities to increase awareness of available post-secondary opportunities;
4. Provide targeted support for academic preparation, to ensure prospective rural students meet university prerequisites;
5. Improve technological and broadband infrastructure to improve accessibility to online learning;
6. Establish local and community-based mentorship and guidance programs for rural students;

7. Promote collaboration between rural municipalities, school boards, and community organizations to support the transition to post-secondary education for rural students.

Member Background

Rural Albertans face systemic barriers that hinder equitable access to post-secondary education. Financial constraints, such as the high cost of tuition, relocation expenses, and limited part-time employment opportunities, disproportionately affect rural families. Geographic isolation necessitates relocation, further increasing costs and contributing to emotional and cultural challenges.

Additionally, rural schools often lack resources for academic preparation, including advanced courses, standardized test preparation, and guidance counselling. Limited access to reliable high-speed internet further restricts rural students from fully engaging with online learning and digital application platforms.

These barriers contribute to the underrepresentation of rural students in Alberta's post-secondary institutions, limiting their ability to contribute to economic and social growth. Addressing these inequities requires a dedicated rural pathway strategy that recognizes rural students as an equity-deserving community and provides the resources and supports necessary for their success.

Developing this strategy will empower rural Albertans to pursue advanced education, fostering stronger, more resilient communities and ensuring their meaningful participation in Alberta's long-term prosperity.

RMA Background

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Resolution 16-25S

Decentralize Provincial Offices to Stimulate Economic Growth

County of Stettler

Carried

Advocacy Target: Premier's Office and Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction

WHEREAS 60% of Government of Alberta employees work in Edmonton and 16% work in Calgary; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta is one of Alberta's largest employers; and

WHEREAS rural Alberta accounts for 18% of the province's population; and

WHEREAS rural Alberta's population has declined by 2.7% since 2016; and

WHEREAS in 2022, the Government of Alberta created the Economic Development in Rural Alberta Plan, citing a refocusing of its efforts on rural economic development;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta advocate for the Government of Alberta to relocate some ministry offices out of Edmonton into rural areas to drive economic growth.

Member Background

It is more important than ever that rural communities are strong, vibrant, and inclusive places to call home, especially concerning Alberta's economic growth. When rural communities succeed, all of Alberta is made stronger. However, areas of Alberta located away from major centers or with small populations have difficulty taking advantage of economic opportunities. These regions require a supportive economic development environment that enables capacity building within their communities to gain the skills and knowledge to take advantage of regional economic opportunities and increase business retention, expansion, and attraction.

In the past decade, many Alberta towns, villages, and rural areas have experienced population decline while cities and urban municipalities continue to grow at an unsustainable rate. Distributed across the province, rural Alberta has housing and infrastructure capacity to relieve pressures seen with concentrated growth.

Alberta's economy is evolving, and modern rural economies extend beyond agricultural production and primary resources. New industries and opportunities are emerging alongside traditional economic drivers. Rural Alberta deserves a strong plan for economic development that reflects innovation, diversification, and sustainable long-term growth.

Over the past year, the Government of Alberta has refocused its rural economic development efforts, demonstrating a commitment to Alberta's rural communities and acknowledging their positive impact on the province's economy. The appointment of a minister responsible for rural economic development led to a series of engagement sessions with rural stakeholders and Indigenous communities to gather their perspectives on the successes, challenges, and opportunities for rural economic development. (Government of Alberta, 2022)

According to the Government of Alberta’s most recent publication on the subject, *Profile on the Alberta Public Service, 2013*, the Government of Alberta employs approximately 27,000 people, not including senior officials, making it one of Alberta’s largest employers. Of these approximately 27,000 employees, their work location is primarily in densely populated urban centers.

Chart 1.0 – Government of Alberta Employee Distribution by Work Location (2013)

Government of Alberta Employee Distribution by Work Location (2013)		
Location	Percentage	Population (2024)
Edmonton	60.0	1.078 million
Calgary	14.1	1.141 million
Red Deer	5.2	105,883
Lethbridge	3.2	104,254
Grand Prairie	1.5	26,701
Peace River	1.3	6,619
Medicine Hat	1.1	63,278
Fort Saskatchewan	1.1	28,500

Source: Government of Alberta – Profile of Alberta Public Service & Employee Distribution (2013)

Rural Alberta accounts for 18% of the province's population, 41% of the public and private investment in the province, and 26% of the provincial Gross Domestic Product. Despite these statistics, the rural Alberta population has declined by 2.7% since 2016. Limited access to communications infrastructure continues to challenge the attraction of new businesses to rural Alberta. (Government of Alberta, 2022)

Locating these offices and jobs in rural areas, including our small urban neighbours, will benefit municipalities, both rural and small urban, by supporting local capacity building and promoting rural economic development.

References

Government of Alberta. (2022). *Economic Development in Rural Alberta Plan*. Government of Alberta.

Government of Alberta. (2013). *Profiles of Alberta Public Service & Employee Distribution*.

RMA Background

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.