

# MATTERS PERTAINING TO SARM

## Midterm Convention Cancellation

### 1-23A | Rural Municipality of Lost River No. 313

**WHEREAS** conventions are an expensive undertaking for municipalities in terms of travel, hotel rooms, expenses, and remuneration.

**WHEREAS** SARM successfully held virtual conventions during the pandemic, eliminating travel expenses but still keeping SARM advocacy strong.

**WHEREAS** SARM Midterm Convention was created to deal with large volumes of resolutions throughout the year. Since 2016, resolution counts have dropped from 88 combined, to 45 between the two conventions, often with resolution topics duplicated.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM consolidates the two conventions into just one annual convention.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that if a predetermined threshold number of resolutions, (as determined by the resolutions committee) are received prior to September 30th, a virtual resolution session will be held to deal with the resolutions.

#### Resolution Background:

Recent election changes make delegate appointment difficult, due to the short time between elections and SARM Midterm Convention. Training at the recent convention was not effective and did not meet our delegates' needs. However, council attended because of resolutions. Early November generally marks the first storms of winter, making travel dangerous.

# IMPACTING THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

## Ministry of Agriculture

### Responsibility & Monitoring of Noxious Weeds on Crown Land & Rights-of-Way

#### 2-23A | Rural Municipality of Dundurn No. 314, Rural Municipality of Britannia No. 502

**WHEREAS** noxious weeds along provincial highway rights-of-way are a significant problem in many rural municipalities, preventing landowners and occupants adjacent to these rights-of-way from fulfilling their general duties under part III section 15 of *the Weed Control Act, 2010*.

**WHEREAS** municipalities do not have authority under *the Weed Control Act, 2010* to take action to destroy noxious weeds in provincial highway rights-of-way or to serve orders for provincial highway land.

**WHEREAS** the provincial government downloaded the responsibility for the management and control of noxious weeds onto their individual lease holders.

**WHEREAS** the provincial government does not currently have any public inventory, mapping or information on the location of noxious weeds contained on Crown land.

**WHEREAS** the provincial government does not currently have a person or contact assigned to oversee mapping and annual control of noxious weeds in conjunction with local municipalities and weed inspectors.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to create publicly accessible mapping and information regarding the location and control of noxious weeds on Crown land.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to establish a permanent position to oversee the contact and collaboration with municipalities on local noxious weed control within provincial rights-of-way and Crown land.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to destroy the noxious weeds in provincial highway rights-of-way and on Crown land, in due season and in a diligent manner, to prevent its spread to other lands, thereby supporting rural landowner and occupant efforts to satisfy their duty to do the same.

## **Resolution Background:**

### **Rural Municipality of Dundurn No. 314:**

Currently the Ministry of Agriculture does not have a formal process for the surveying or inspection of leased Crown Land for the occurrence of noxious weeds. They rely on the lessee to self-report and investigate. On locations that the Ministry of Agriculture has established that noxious weeds are present, they do not make that information readily available to the public or municipalities. They have failed to provide municipalities with vital information necessary for the management of noxious weeds.

### **Rural Municipality of Dundurn No. 314:**

At present, the Ministry of Highways does not have dedicated staff to deal with the spread and prevalence of noxious weeds in Highway rights-of-way. Most municipalities will take the initiative to spray the highway rights-of-way on behalf of the province in order to ensure that spread does not occur. There currently isn't staff or a process to report and map these locations, so that an efficient roll out of inspection and spraying occurs.

### **Rural Municipality of Britannia No. 502:**

Under the *Weed Control Act, 2010*, a municipality is deemed to be the owner of the roads within its boundaries. Roads, as defined in the Act, include streets, lanes, public highways and road allowances. *The Highways and Transportation Act, 1997* and *the Municipalities Act, 2005* differentiate between “public highways” and “provincial highways”, and, as per section 12 of *the Municipalities Act, 2005*, a municipality has the direction, control, and management of all streets and all roads, other than provincial highways, within the municipality. Municipalities therefore do not have authority to act in a provincial highways right-of-way.

The *Weed Control Act, 2010* contains provisions for serving orders relating to lands owned by an irrigation company or drainage association (section 42), Railway Companies (section 43) and persons operating certain oil and gas facilities (section 44) but makes no consideration for serving orders relating to lands deemed to be a part of a provincial highway. Therefore, there is no enforceable action a municipality can take regarding noxious weeds in a provincial highway right-of-way.

Under part III s. 15 of *the Weed Control Act, 2010* landowners and occupants have the general duty to contain, control, and eradicate noxious weeds located on their land, in due season and in a diligent manner.

The RM has four provincial highways running through it. The provincial highway rights-of-way are full of noxious weeds and the Ministry of Highways does not address these noxious weeds in a consistent, timely, and effective manner.

Private land within the RM borders 45 miles (72 kms) of provincial highways; 29 miles (46.7 kms) of the 45 miles are adjacent to private land within two neighboring municipalities as well. The impact of the noxious weeds spreading from provincial highway rights-of-way onto private agricultural land is costly and discouraging for the owners and occupants of the land. It is difficult to control noxious weeds and prevent the weeds from spreading to other land when their provincial highway neighbors are not doing the same.

The RM has put this resolution forward with the intention of supporting not only landowners and occupants within their boundaries, but landowners and occupants across Saskatchewan are struggling to fulfill their duty under *the Weed Control Act, 2010* as a result of noxious weeds spreading from provincial highway rights-of-way.

## **Saskatchewan Crop Insurance**

### **3-23A | Rural Municipality of Baildon No. 131**

**WHEREAS** with input costs being significantly higher, producers should have the option to purchase additional coverage.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to amend the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation Policy to allow for increased coverage up to 95%.

## **Resolution Background:**

Producers in the Province of Saskatchewan have the option to buy crop insurance through the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation program. Currently the program allows producers to buy up to 80% coverage.

## Rural Veterinary Service Disruptions

### 4-23A | Rural Municipality of Mount Pleasant No. 2, Rural Municipality of Moose Creek No. 33, Rural Municipality of Enniskillen No. 3

**WHEREAS** many people in rural Saskatchewan, whether livestock or pet owners, utilize veterinary services on a regular basis.

**WHEREAS** veterinary services are an essential service for ranchers in rural Saskatchewan to ensure their livelihood.

**WHEREAS** rural communities are facing a lack of veterinary services due to poor veterinary retention, replacement, and recruitment, resulting in an animal welfare issue.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to provide incentive programs to help recruit veterinarians and veterinary technicians to rural communities, including, but not limited to, funding for relocation, capital building projects, education, and operating expenses.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association (SVMA) to review the scope of practice for Registered Veterinary Technologists for expansion to their scope of practice to alleviate pressure on veterinarians.

#### Resolution Background:

We were prompted to submit this resolution after losing one veterinarian from our area, as well as the knowledge of others soon-to-be-retirement, and thus the imminent lack of veterinary services to our ratepayers. We approached a community veterinarian with our concerns, who agreed that there was too high of a need for veterinary services than what he could provide. This has resulted in a joint Vet Board with several municipalities to help recruit veterinary services to the area. The Vet Board felt that this was a larger issue that was affecting rural communities throughout the province, and thus one that the provincial government should be made aware of. This resolution will only benefit SARM members, if successful, and would positively impact any other RM's with the same problem. If passed, we are hoping to see real discussion between SARM and the Provincial Government to address this issue and see incentives from the Provincial Government to help rural communities with veterinary services, of which we believe is an essential service to many ratepayers within Rural Municipalities.

## Ministry of Environment

### Environmental Regulations

#### 5-23A | Rural Municipality of Hillsdale No. 440

**WHEREAS** the Government of Saskatchewan states in its Growth Plan, “a plan to build a stronger Saskatchewan by growing the agricultural economy; growing the oil, gas, and natural resource economy; building stronger communities by investing in infrastructure.”

**WHEREAS** the province and municipalities have huge infrastructure deficits.

**WHEREAS** municipalities that are constructing roads and decreasing their infrastructure deficits are paying large amounts of money to meet the requirements set out in the *Environmental Assessment Act*, *Environmental Management Protection Act, 2010* and Aquatic Habitat Protection Permits.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to eliminate overregulation around small water bodies and ensure that environmental requirements are consistent across the province.

#### Resolution Background:

The RM of Hillsdale No. 440 has been constructed in the last five years, and we have seen our environmental costs per mile more than double. Our 2022 project cost us \$7500 per mile for environmental on a road where the water bodies do not flow anywhere, and most were dried up when the project was finished. In 2018 we had a construction project that we built around a named lake where the costs for environmental were only \$3600 per mile. We would like to see regulations and permit requirements that are predictable and reasonable.

## **Depredation Tag Program**

### **6-23A | Rural Municipality of Lumsden No. 189, Rural Municipality of Insinger No. 275**

**WHEREAS** increased deer and elk populations and decreased hunting pressures results in farmers and ranchers being negatively impacted by large herds of wildlife depleting their winter feed supplies, crop in storage bags and piles, fences, infrastructure, and grazed pastures.

**WHEREAS** finding additional feed and supplements is becoming difficult to replace due to damage sustained by the large deer and elk herds consuming the winter feed rations.

**WHEREAS** many laws and regulations exist to protect wildlife, but very few avenues or programs are available to producers to allow them to protect their winter feed supplies.

**WHEREAS** from 2017 to 2021 there were 15,521 claims.

**WHEREAS** the Provincial Crop Insurance number of claims for big game wildlife also continue to increase each year.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to reintroduce the depredation tag program to Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers who are being impacted by wildlife damaging and depleting winter feed supplies.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to work with Crop Insurance on obtaining the information for high claim areas.

#### **Resolution Background:**

##### **Rural Municipality of Lumsden No. 189:**

Landowners in the RM of Lumsden are experiencing damage and depleted feed supplies from large herds of deer eating stored winter feed.

This resolution asks for SARM's support in lobbying the government to reinstate the depredation tag program to landowners to control deer eating feed supplies.

##### **Rural Municipality of Insinger No. 275:**

Ratepayers and council members are experiencing larger and larger herds of elk coming into feed yards as well as grain storage bags being destroyed. Herds are in numbers of 30-200 in our area. Grains bags have been destroyed this winter in all areas of the RM as well as many feed yards and with an early winter for us many bales in fields were destroyed.

Wildlife - Big game claims according to Crop Insurance

2017 - 1555, 2018 - 2344, 2019 - 5093, 2020 - 2895, 2021 - 3634

## **Transport Canada & Rail Companies**

### **Stagger Railway Crossing Signs**

#### **7-23A | Rural Municipality of Bayne No. 371**

**WHEREAS** farmers incur crossings in fields and along back roads and cannot move their equipment across without removing headers to access their land.

**WHEREAS** many rail crossings run through a farmer's field.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that rail companies stagger their crossing signs to allow for farm machinery to navigate through the crossing without removing headers.

#### **Resolution Background:**

Council feels we need some changes to the rail crossing issue and that it will benefit all farmers with crossings. Farmers are experiencing frustration at losing crucial time during an important time of year.

# Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

## Extended Drought Tax Deferral

### 8-23A | Rural Municipality of Chesterfield No. 261

**WHEREAS** the federal government grants a one-year tax deferral on the proceeds of sale of breeding stock sold due to drought for producers operating in designated drought zones.

**WHEREAS** one year is often insufficient time for grasslands to recover from drought.

**WHEREAS** returning livestock to drought damaged grasslands before they have recovered is detrimental to long term sustainability.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the federal and provincial government to extend the drought tax deferral to a minimum of two years.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that in cases where a municipality is designated as a drought zone in consecutive years, that the deferral be extended to one year following the removal of that municipality from designated drought zone status.

#### **Resolution Background:**

The RM of Chesterfield No. 261 is located in west-central Saskatchewan along the Alberta border. It is a region that is typically drier than the rest of the province. The west side of the municipality, which is mostly grassland, much of it is native range, has struggled with drought conditions many times over the decades. Over the last four years drought has been unrelenting. Many cattle producers have experienced tremendous difficulty in finding summer grazing and winter feed to sustain their herds. The problems intensify with each successive year of drought. This has resulted in the downsizing and dispersal of cow herds throughout the affected area. Thankfully the Federal Government recognizes regions that are struggling with drought and offers a one-year tax deferral on the proceeds of sale, for breeding animals sold due to dry conditions. Unfortunately, the grasslands in our municipality, and in many others as well, have been unable to recover because of multiple years of continued drought. We are at a point now that grasslands will require multiple years of normal, or even above normal rainfall, to replenish and heal. This would be the case even if all livestock were removed from these grazing lands.

While the one-year tax deferral is beneficial, producers know that grasslands, and in particular, native grasslands, need more than one year to recover from drought. That recovery period is even greater after successive years of drought. That is why our council thought it was important to bring forward this resolution at this time. It makes no sense to force livestock producers that have taken advantage of the one-year tax deferral to buy breeding stock and return them to drought damaged rangeland, simply to avoid taxation. The government needs to take a longer view of this problem and extend deferrals until the land can once again sustain breeding herds. All livestock producers across the province suffer drought conditions occasionally. Our council believes that all of them should have the opportunity to do what is right for the health of the land they control. Extended tax deferrals can play a role in producers achieving sustainability.

## MUNICIPAL IN NATURE

# Ministry of Government Relations

## Tax Rate Ratio

### 9-23A | Rural Municipality of Mervin No. 499

**WHEREAS** the Government of Saskatchewan has implemented tax tool changes including lowering the effective tax rate ratio to 7:1 from 9:1 without consulting with the municipalities of Saskatchewan.

**WHEREAS** these changes detrimentally impact municipalities in which commercial enterprises cause extensive costs that were previously funded using a 9:1 ratio and tax tools such as base taxes.

**WHEREAS** these municipalities now need to recover these costs elsewhere.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the government to rescind the ratio changes.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that if the ratio changes are “arbitrarily” implemented, SARM lobby the government to offset the tax losses by 50% for 3 years to give the affected municipalities time to develop initiatives.

**Resolution Background:**

In April of 2022, the Ministry of Government Relations issued the new tax ratio change in tax tool from 9:1 to 7:1. The change included all tax tools such as base tax and minimum tax tools.

This was done after a significant lobby from Industry. What this does is have many RM’s that have heavy oil and industry at a substantial tax revenue loss. A brief survey of neighboring municipalities shows over 15 million dollars of tax revenue loss.

We feel that the government is penalizing all municipalities for perhaps a few that have been unfair.

This drastic change was not phased in, but the municipalities are expecting our ratepayers to cover this loss. The number of resources that goes into the upkeep of our infrastructure to allow the usage 24/7 – 365 days, far exceeds what the seasonal usage done by the agriculture and residents of the municipalities.

RM’s are left with no recourse but to cut services because there is no way that we can ask our ratepayers to cover the tax losses that we are incurring.

**Lake District**

**10-23A | Rural Municipality of Meota No. 468**

**WHEREAS** the provisions for the establishment of a municipal district under *The Municipalities Act* do not allow for a portion of a rural municipality to form a municipal district and requires that a municipal district contains at least one former rural municipality and one former urban municipality in their entirety.

**WHEREAS** organized hamlets located adjacent to lakes have unique governance interests from the rural municipality. Establishing provisions for the formation of a lake district that may include portions of a former rural municipality, organized hamlet, unorganized hamlet, and/or urban municipality will provide a legislative governance framework to satisfy these unique interests and foster collaboration.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the Ministry of Government Relations to amend *The Municipalities Act* to allow for the establishment of a Lake District.

**Resolution Background:**

The requirement to establish a division boundaries review policy triggered governance concerns from the agriculture sector. Residents of organized hamlets are provided with autonomy to establish their own unique taxation rates and service levels by agreement. The autonomy of agricultural producers and rural residents is significantly impacted in some rural municipalities in which the number of voters within organized hamlets far exceeds the number of voters outside of organized hamlets. The establishment of a lake district could provide a legislative framework for organized hamlets to maintain autonomy through the provision of special service areas while ensuring the unique needs of the agricultural sector and rural residents are met by the rural municipality. A lake district governance model will provide an opportunity for effective governance for numerous communities located adjacent to lakes.

**Reassignment of Development Costs**

**11-23A | Rural Municipality of Mervin No. 499**

**WHEREAS** subdivision development is becoming more prevalent in both rural and small urban municipalities

**WHEREAS** section 92 of *The Municipalities Act* states that council must maintain the financial integrity of the municipality.

**WHEREAS** *The Municipalities Act* further states that council must represent the public interest and wellbeing of the municipality.

**WHEREAS** most subdivisions are completed either for profit of selling the resultant properties, or for estate planning purposes.

**WHEREAS** municipalities must conduct a thorough review of proposed subdivisions which results in the municipality incurring costs associated with the additional resources required to complete these applications.

**WHEREAS** it is the expressed stance of all levels of government that development should pay for itself. To continue to pass the costs to taxpayers could be interpreted as a contravention of section 92 of *The Municipalities Act*.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government that all costs to the municipality for the review, processing, and evaluation of a proposed subdivision should be charged back to the Developer.

**Resolution Background:**

Specifics:

- “Development shall pay for itself”
  - in most cases, subdivisions are completed for the profit of selling the properties, or estate planning.
  - Costs should not be passed to taxpayers who will get little-to-no benefit from the subdivision.
  - Municipalities often assist developers with navigating these proposals.
- Some of the municipal costs of new parcels may be recouped under *the Planning & Development Act (PDA)* (171).
  - Development Levy bylaws can result in recouping costs where an upgrade of services is required.
  - Servicing Agreements allow for the municipality to require the Developer to pay for or reimburse earthworks, utilities, future capital costs to infrastructure and additional services if required. (PDA 172)
- However, recouping other costs are not clearly specified in the PDA such as:
  - Review of the subdivision with the OCP and ZB.
  - Asset management evaluation.
  - Assistance to Developers to navigate the application process.
- This leads to the costs of these services being absorbed by the ratepayers, while the Developers proposing the subdivision make a profit.
- Occasionally a subdivision is reviewed but then withdrawn resulting in costs left unpaid.
- It should be noted that these costs are directly caused by the subdivision proposal. They are an expense outside of taxation’s rationale which is to provide for the ongoing operation and maintenance of services and infrastructure.

**Fees for Drilling Oil Wells and Gas Wells**

**12-23A | Rural Municipality of Browning No. 34**

**WHEREAS** the *Municipalities Act* and *The Municipalities Regulations* authorize municipalities to charge a fee for drilling oil wells and gas wells.

**WHEREAS** the fee is set at \$450 for drilling an oil or gas well, and \$225 for exploratory drill holes.

**WHEREAS** the fees for drilling oil wells and gas wells were originally at their current prices in The Rural Municipality Oil Well and Gas Well Drilling Fees Schedule Regulations in 1991, and resolutions to review these fees were presented at the 2002 and 2008 SARM Midterm Conventions but resulted in no change.

**WHEREAS** the fees for drilling oil wells and gas wells do not adequately cover the expenses of the municipality in the review and administration of drilling applications.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the Ministry of Government Relations to engage in consultations with all applicable stakeholders to review the fees for drilling oil wells and gas wells, and that the Ministry of Government Relations set the well fees in *The Municipalities Regulations* at a fair rate for both industry and municipalities.

### **Resolution Background:**

The RM of Browning No. 34 is in the heart of the Southeast Saskatchewan oilfield. In 2022 the RM received 126 of the approximately 2500+ drilling licenses. Due to the abundance of oil activity, we employ a full-time assistant with the purpose of reviewing pipeline crossings, access approach approvals, new applications, and issuing overweight permits (of which we had 729 in 2022). The fee for drilling oil and gas wells is meant to cover the cost of accommodating new wells, but clearly the expenses of doing so have been left behind. The goal of this resolution is to engage the Ministry of Government Relations in consulting with stakeholders to review this fee and set it at a fair price to keep industry competitive and fairly compensate municipalities.

### **Municipal Code of Ethics Bylaws – Provision to Disqualify from Office**

#### **13-23A | Rural Municipality of Baidon No. 131**

**WHEREAS** all rural municipalities are required to have a Code of Ethics bylaw, pursuant to section 93.1 of *The Municipalities Act*.

**WHEREAS** subsection 93.1(7)(d) of *The Municipalities Act* states that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations prescribing rules or limitations regarding the censure or suspension of a member of council who has contravened a code of ethics adopted pursuant to this section.

**WHEREAS** the sample Code of Ethics Bylaw prepared by the Ministry of Government Relations only contemplates remedial actions as strong as suspension of a member of council for a Code of Ethics violation.

**WHEREAS** section 147 of *The Municipalities Act* states the reasons that a member of council may be disqualified, which include violations of section 142 (Public Disclosure Statements) and section 144 (Disclosure of Conflict of Interest) of the act, but not around matters relating to violations of Code of Ethics.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to amend *The Municipalities Act* to contemplate members of council being disqualified from council as a remedial measure to the most severe violations of a Code of Ethics bylaw.

### **Resolution Background:**

It is a requirement of *The Municipalities Act* that RMs implement a Code of Ethics Bylaw. Neither *The Municipalities Act* nor the Regulations clearly stipulate what remedial actions are permitted when a member of council violates their Municipal Code of Ethics. The Ministry's template does showcase some example remedies, but only advises that "These are examples only and represent possible options. It is important that the council discuss appropriate courses of action before passing a bylaw and consult their legal counsel. Any actions chosen for your bylaw must be allowed by the applicable legislation and regulations."

While members of council must abide by the Code of Ethics, and RMs are given the power to alter the Bylaw, it also seems to us that the Code of Ethics section of the Act lacks the teeth that are found in the Conflict of Interest section of the Act. This can leave a municipality vulnerable to bad actors. If Ethics violations are brought forward, can be independently substantiated and remedial actions are taken against an offending council member, but that member chooses to not abide by those remedies set out in the Bylaw, what recourse do we as an RM have?

Around our council table, it seems to us that if failing to complete a Public Disclosure Statement or failing to disclose a Conflict of Interest can be grounds for disqualification from office, why wouldn't there be similar provisions for the most serious of Code of Ethics violations?

We are asking our fellow SARM members to support our motion to have the Provincial Government provide us with more tools for enforcement for Code of Ethics violations and for disqualification from office to be made such an option for the most serious of such violations.

### **Municipal Code of Ethics Bylaws – Immunity Provisions for Municipalities from Litigation**

#### **14-23A | Rural Municipality of Baidon No. 131**

**WHEREAS** all rural municipalities are required to have a Code of Ethics bylaw, pursuant to Section 93.1 of *The Municipalities Act*.

**WHEREAS** aggrieved members of council, committees, controlled corporations or other bodies established by council who are not members of council, who, upon being made subject to remedial provisions of a municipal Code of Ethics bylaw, could pursue legal recourse against the municipality, rather than complying with the bylaw provisions.

**WHEREAS** such legal recourse taken against the municipality can cost the municipality greatly in terms of financial resources, human resources and morale.

**WHEREAS** municipalities placed in this situation can be there through no fault of their own, other than the legal requirement to have a Code of Ethics bylaw.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to amend *The Municipalities Act* to add provisions for immunity for municipalities against litigation over their Code of Ethics bylaws, unless the aggrieved party can prove that such action was taken as a result of bad faith on the part of the municipality.

**Resolution Background:**

Further to our other resolution, the RM of Baildon has had a challenging, firsthand experience with the Code of Ethics bylaws. As a result of formal complaints made, following our bylaw we had a third-party investigation. When the third-party investigation report was released, it validated numerous ethics violations. As a result, our council followed our prescribed remedial actions and requested an apology from the member in question to the impacted individual(s), as well as set up educational training on ethical and respectful conduct (by an outside source). When the member in question would not abide by these requests, they were then suspended from council committees, and eventually suspended from council altogether until there was compliance.

While our municipality has followed the outlined procedures and prescribed steps within our Ethics Bylaw, not only has the member in question not complied with the remedial actions requested, but we have also found ourselves in a costly, ongoing court battle with this member over the validity of our provincially mandated Code of Ethics Bylaw.

We are seeking our fellow SARM members support of this resolution so that in the future all municipalities could have legal protection, in the form of immunity from liability from similar actions, so long as the municipality was acting in good faith through the development and utilization of its Code of Ethics bylaws. This would help municipalities eliminate some risk and give a clear off ramp for any future similar litigation, should it arise.

**Taxable Enforcement of Bylaw Penalties**

**15-23A | Rural Municipality of Estevan No. 5**

**WHEREAS** there are minor Bylaw offences, such as, but not limited to, dogs running at large and parking infractions, to which a voluntary payment option may be available to the offender pursuant to the terms of an RM Bylaw.

**WHEREAS** in the event an offender does not voluntarily make payment, further enforcement action against the offender is required through the Court system which is cost prohibitive and time consuming for Rural Municipalities to pursue.

**WHEREAS** it would be desirable that if the offender (a) is a ratepayer of the Rural Municipality in which the offence took place; (b) fails to respond to the offence notice; and (c) fails to pay an amount equal to the specified penalty sum for the offence within a stipulated time period, that the specified penalty sum be added to the ratepayer's annual municipal taxes, in order to enforce and collect the specified penalty sum.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to amend *The Summary Offences Procedures Act, 1990*, and, to the extent required, *The Municipalities Act*, to allow enforcement of certain Bylaw offences to which a voluntary payment option exists by adding such fine to the ratepayer's annual municipal taxes if not paid within the time stipulated in the Bylaw.

### **Resolution Background:**

The RM of Estevan has had to deal with numerous Bylaw offences, most particularly animals running at large. If such animals running at large are owned by a ratepayer, the ratepayer fails to respond to the offence notice and fails to voluntarily pay an amount equal to the specified penalty sum for the offence, then the only recourse for the RM is to continue prosecution by way of summary conviction proceedings under the Bylaw and *The Summary Offences Procedures Act, 1990*. This procedure usually requires the assistance of a lawyer or a Bylaw Enforcement Officer and is costly and time-consuming and usually only nets a very small fine. Allowing the imposition of a penalty akin to a "default conviction" would assist the RM in enforcing many of its Bylaws by the imposition of the specified penalty amount. The intention of this amendment, however, is not to take away an offender's right to dispute the Bylaw offence if he or she chooses to do so.

## **Ministry of Energy and Resources**

### **Single-Window Development System**

#### **16-23A | Rural Municipality of Browning No. 34**

**WHEREAS** the Ministry of Energy and Resources is in the process of creating a single-window application system for all resource development activities requiring permitting or invoicing from municipalities as per the Province of Saskatchewan's Plan for Growth to 2030.

**WHEREAS** in January 2022, the Ministry of Government Relations, SARM, CAPP, and EPAC created a Steering Committee to direct this project and did not notify any municipalities or other affected parties until the 2022 SARM Midterm Convention.

**WHEREAS** there are existing private companies offering uniform application systems for oil and gas development, which are utilized by most municipalities receiving majority of the applications; and that all municipalities utilizing these private companies have already invested significant municipal time and funds.

**WHEREAS** the primary purpose for the Province of Saskatchewan is to create the Laws and Policies for the province, and not to create businesses that are already clearly serviced by the private sector.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the Ministry of Government Relations and the Ministry of Energy and Resources to abandon any further development of a Single-Window Development System for applications in the oil and gas sector to municipalities.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that SARM encourage the Ministry of Government Relations and the Ministry of Energy and Resources to work with the existing private companies to create an optional development system for applications in the oil and gas sector to municipalities for any municipality that chooses to do so.

### **Resolution Background:**

In November 2022, the R.M. of Browning No. 34 learned alongside the rest of the municipalities with oil and gas activity that the Ministry of Energy and Resources were planning to implement a Single Window Development System for Permitting and Invoices. This is a concern to our municipality along with several others as we support private companies already providing this service such as Road Data and Welltraxx. The R.M. of Browning No. 34 has invested significant municipal funds, time, and resources into Welltraxx to provide a simplified process for issuing development permits and invoicing. With the implementation of a Single Window Development System, all our commitment along with other municipalities to private companies will be lost, and companies already providing these services will be effectively put out of business in Saskatchewan.

## **Ministry of Highways**

### **Interactive Road Mapping**

#### **17-23A | Rural Municipality of Lumsden No. 189**

**WHEREAS** one of the biggest responsibilities of a rural municipality is maintaining a large network of municipal roads.

**WHEREAS** communicating specific land locations for road condition reporting can be cumbersome for both the municipality and ratepayers looking for the information.

**WHEREAS** to the best of our knowledge, there are no municipalities currently using an interactive mapping option, and those we have researched are expensive.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM investigate an interactive mapping option that is affordable and reaches province wide, such as the Highway Hotline, which can be used year-round for all road conditions (snow, construction, closures, etc.).

**Resolution Background:**

After experiencing a large snowfall on two occasions at the end of 2022, our municipality realized that an interactive mapping option would be the best way to communicate road conditions to both our ratepayers and other travelers passing through the municipality.

Our municipality has researched some mapping options, but the options are cost prohibitive.

If the SARM membership comes together, perhaps the cost can be reduced for individual municipalities that wish to participate. This would also provide a uniform mapping system, like the Highway Hotline, that can be accessed at no cost by motorists.

**Municipalities Provided First Right of Refusal for Land  
18-23A | Rural Municipality of Blucher No. 343**

**WHEREAS** the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure continues to improve major provincial highways which sometimes includes twinning.

**WHEREAS** in the process of these upgrades and changes sometimes highway rights-of-way and lands are no longer necessary for the Ministry.

**WHEREAS** the current policies in place for the disposal of these lands include public tender in some instances and/or selling the land to the adjacent landowners for market value regardless of the state or usability of the lands.

**WHEREAS** these policies can and have resulted in huge delays due to justifying lower sale prices for the lands and sometimes parcels of lands that are completely useless after their sale.

**WHEREAS** the municipality, be it rural or urban, is not offered first right of refusal on these lands even though they would be used for municipal purposes.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure to amend their policies to give municipalities the first right of refusal when reasonable and negotiate with those municipalities in good faith and with reason.

**Resolution Background:**

The Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure completed the twinning of Highway 16 east of Saskatoon in 2019. As a result of that twinning there were a few random parcels created due to the routing of the highway - the former weigh scale property immediately adjacent to the old 16 highway that passed north of Clavet and some old right of way that was no longer needed.

The RM approached highways about purchasing the old weigh scale in order to maintain it for ratepayer use. The Ministry's policy is that it must go for public tender. As a result, a person bought the property without doing due diligence and is unable to develop it in any fashion due to its location and zoning. He then sold it to another person and did not disclose this issue and now we are about to enter litigation as this person is in violation of the OCP and Zoning bylaw.

Next, there is highway right-of-way that is no longer needed and may be sold to adjacent landowners. Great. Except that the Ministry's policy is to sell the land for the same per acre value as the adjoining lands. As the adjoining lands are all developed and serviced this would have resulted in a price close to 1 million dollars for four parcels. This may have been reasonable except that this property in question is a 20-foot-deep ditch that would take thousands of yards of infill to render usable. The ditch is deep enough that it has two 8-foot culverts running under the highway that the Clavet high school students use as a pedway to go from Clavet to the school bypassing the highway.

After three years of negotiations and ultimately an appraisal, the Ministry will now sell the land for less than our initial offer. There is a significant lack of common sense when dealing with the Ministry in these matters and it is to absolutely no one's benefit.

# Ministry of Education & Ministry Responsible for Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan

## Improvement of Internet Access in Saskatchewan Rural Schools

19-23A | Rural Municipality of Prince Albert No. 461, Rural Municipality of Garden River No. 490

**WHEREAS** there currently exists a disparity with respect to internet connectivity between urban and rural schools in the province of Saskatchewan.

**WHEREAS** there is a need to bridge the connectivity gap of broadband service provided to rural schools when compared to urban schools. It is crucial for rural students to have equitable access to technology and learning opportunities.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government, including the Ministry of Education, and all internet service providers in Saskatchewan, to jointly review and make recommendations on expanding broadband service to rural schools.

### Resolution Background:

Several communities and municipalities engaged in a roundtable discussion with our local school board. It was determined that there were several areas in which educators were hindered unnecessarily from utilizing tools(internet) to aid in education delivery in rural schools. Passing this resolution and successful lobbying would allow greater online access and a more effective delivery by educators in every rural ("country") school. Our RMs have reached out to local MLA(s) and will continue to do so on this issue. Our intention by submitting this resolution is to ensure the children of our rural communities have the best access to educational tools and information, so that they receive the best education available and can be successful in all future endeavors.

# Ministry of Environment

## Increase Fines for Littering

20-23A | Rural Municipality of Bayne No. 371

**WHEREAS** littering has become a significant issue for RM's throughout the province costing RM's time and money cleaning up the mess.

**WHEREAS** garbage is unsightly and creates a risk to wildlife and the environment.

**WHEREAS** conservation officers are left to deal with people's garbage which is taking them away from other pressing violations.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to increase the fines to those that are littering.

### Resolution Background:

We have had up to 40 bags of garbage dumped from residents outside our municipality. It took quite a while to get a resolution to this due to the volume of garbage complaints the COs handle in the area.

We cannot fine the offenders yet, as such the RMs incur the cost of cleanup.

If we have higher fines, and more COs, people may think more before discarding their litter in the ditches.

## Designated Dumping Area for Truckers

21-23A | Rural Municipality of Silverwood No. 123

**WHEREAS** truckers hauling commodities are stopping to clean out and dump trailers along roadways which can cause the unwanted spread of weed and commodity seeds.

**WHEREAS** trucks hauling fertilizer that are cleaned out on roadways can cause contamination of waterways.

**WHEREAS** grain dumped on roads attracts wildlife which can lead to more vehicle collisions.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to require all grain handling facilities to have a specific area designated where trucks can be cleaned out after unloading.

**Resolution Background:**

Commercial truckers cleaning out their trailers on the side of RM roads have been an ongoing issue for years. The problem has been reported by many RMs. If the outcome of this resolution is successful it will help all RMs dealing with this issue to make roads safer, reduce accident claims through SGI caused by wildlife collisions and reduce the spreading of noxious weeds.

The RM has installed "no dumping" signs in the problem areas as well as raised awareness through newsletters with little to no effect.

When you talk to truckers about the problem, they say the issue is that grain terminals are not allowing them to clean out their trailers at the terminal. They need clean trailers for their next load so with no place to clean out, they stop on RM roads. The intended outcome is to have a place at all terminals to safely clean out trailers so that RM roads are not used instead.

**Rat Control Program Compensation****22-23A | Rural Municipality of Parkdale No. 498**

**WHEREAS** rat control is a very important part in maintaining our health, and maintaining a higher quality of grain, which in turn, helps us support our farmers' livelihoods.

**WHEREAS** the rat control program in place currently helps ensure the rat population will stay at a minimum.

**WHEREAS** if the rat control program does not see an increase in funding, it is likely that areas may have to reduce their contribution to the program, in turn, seeing an increase in the rat population once again.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the Ministry of Agriculture to increase the funding for the Rat Control Program to ensure that the program can continue, without the need to pass on any associated costs to our ratepayers.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that SARM approach the Ministry of Environment and request that compensation for the Rat Control Program see an increase in funding in the coming years.

**Resolution Background:**

After reviewing the financials, the district 38 Pest Control Committee, that is comprised of five municipalities, are consistently losing \$5000 per year to fund the rat control program. Increased funding would alleviate the pressure of rising costs and allow municipalities to sustain the program without raising mill rates. The ability to provide pest control is a vital service for all municipalities as it reduces health risks.

**Packing of Pest Control Products****23-23A | Rural Municipality of Storthoaks No. 31**

**WHEREAS** pest control products are being packed in larger quantities.

**WHEREAS** packages of pest control products need to be divided at times to hand out in smaller portions to ratepayers resulting in difficulties distributing the products and creating potentially hazardous situations during the handling of the products.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby to have pest control products packaged in smaller quantities for distribution.

**Resolution Background:**

Our municipality purchases pest control products; most of the pest control products are distributed by our pest control officer although products are also available for ratepayers to pick up at the municipal office. Product packaging has changed over the last few years and products are shipped in bulk packaging resulting in products needing to be repackaged in smaller portions to accommodate the product needs of ratepayers. If products were packaged in smaller quantities, it would eliminate the unnecessary repacking of products.

# Water Security Agency

## Water Drainage Practices in Rural Municipalities

### 24-23A | Rural Municipality of Pleasantdale No. 398

**WHEREAS** municipalities and landowners are unjustly penalized for unpermitted works performed by others on their land with corrective compliance measures being issued against the landowner regardless of who did the work.

**WHEREAS** these drainage works are being constructed within municipal infrastructure and on private lands without the authorization of the Water Security Agency.

**WHEREAS** costs associated with the drainage works can be passed to the responsible party if they are a ratepayer, however this opens the municipality up to the possibility of litigation.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the Water Security Agency to hold those initiating the drainage activities responsible and to enforce actions to remediate all the unapproved drainage activities on those that are responsible for facilitating the work.

#### **Resolution Background:**

The RM of Pleasantdale No. 398 is working towards enforcement of unpermitted drainage works within its municipal infrastructure; municipalities do not have the enforcement capabilities of WSA.

The municipality believes that unpermitted work is happening in many municipalities across Saskatchewan; we are asking for SARM to lobby the Minister of Environment and WSA to enforce stiffer penalties against those performing these non-permitted works.

The RM of Pleasantdale No. 398 is taking measures to rectify past actions taken by landowners who drained their land (without permits) to gain arable acres. This practice cannot be allowed to continue as it has the potential to affect all owners downstream from the drainage location.

The RM is seeking stronger policies to be created and consistent enforcement follow through on these policies. We are asking that WSA do their due diligence, step forward and assist municipalities in their actions to take back the management of their infrastructure.

Unpermitted drainage activities put a strain on municipalities' resources when it comes to municipal infrastructure that is impacted by water undermining the roads. It affects not only the maintenance of the roads but also culverts. The cost of upkeep on municipal roads is increasing yearly at the cost of ratepayers; we want this action to stop.

We have implemented a policy with the assistance of SARM legal to allow the municipality to mitigate issues at their discretion by a third party.

# Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety

## Increased Conservation Officers for the Province

### 25-23A | Rural Municipality of Bayne No. 371

**WHEREAS** the umbrella of a conservation officer is vast, involving fish & game violations, garbage violations, the new trespassing law, paperwork, along with many more duties.

**WHEREAS** conservation officers have a large area to cover, and response times lag due to all their duties.

**WHEREAS** there are not enough conservation officers to cover all their duties.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to recruit more conservation officers to better serve our municipalities and protect the wildlife and environment.

#### **Resolution Background:**

Council feels change is needed with the number of conservation officers in the province. It would help the entire province manage the wildlife and environmental concerns. This would benefit all the RMs within the province. It would improve the time when complaints are handled and resolved.

We had 40 bags of garbage dumped in our road allowance last fall and while the officers attended within a few days, the investigation and clean up took a lot longer.

## **Rural Crime Increasing**

### **26-23A | Rural Municipality of Pittville No. 169**

**WHEREAS** crime has continued to increase in rural areas.

**WHEREAS** landowners/individuals have wait times for the RCMP responding for service that are too long.

**WHEREAS** landowners/individuals do not have sufficient rights to protect themselves and their property.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial and federal governments to increase the number of officers.

#### **Resolution Background:**

Crime has been increasing in the municipality. Crime is increasing in the rural areas of Saskatchewan as a whole. A quick search of resolutions on SARM's database shows this is an ongoing issue as it was discussed on the floor during this convention in 2003 and continues until today with no resolution. We need to pressure federal and provincial governments to change the laws and to make penalties stronger for these crimes.

## **Ministry of Environment and Climate Change**

### **Ducks Unlimited Canada Lands**

#### **27-23A | Rural Municipality of Churchbridge No. 211, Rural Municipality of Lakeview No. 337, Rural Municipality of Calder No. 241**

**WHEREAS** Ducks Unlimited Canada is not an agricultural Producer.

**WHEREAS** Ducks Unlimited Canada's main source of income is not agriculture related.

**WHEREAS** Ducks Unlimited Canada has benefited from agricultural property classification.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the provincial government to change the classification of land owned by Ducks Unlimited Canada and similar organizations to a commercial land classification.

#### **Resolution Background:**

Ducks Unlimited property has not been maintained and they don't have the same agenda as an agricultural producer. The property is overgrown with tall vegetation, beaver dams, downed trees and is a fire hazard. Maintenance costs to the RM are higher due to blocked culverts and back flooding of adjacent lands. A management plan is required regarding these lands and yet this municipality has not seen one. Land can only be grazed 1 in 3 years. Ducks Unlimited owns 44 quarters of land in this RM. These quarters are considered to have conservation easements on them. There is also another 2144.1 acres within this municipality that Ducks Unlimited Canada holds conservation easements on.

## **Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, Seniors and Rural and Remote Health (Provincial) & Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health (Federal)**

### **Mental Health Support for Youth**

#### **28-23A | Rural Municipality of Lake of the Rivers No. 72**

**WHEREAS** the protection of our youth should be a priority to municipal, provincial, and federal governments.

**WHEREAS** 1.2 million children and youth in Canada are affected by mental illness, yet less than 20% will receive appropriate treatment.

**WHEREAS** 70% of mental health problems have their onset during childhood and adolescence.

**WHEREAS** an estimated 75% of children with mental disorders do not access specialized treatment services.

**WHEREAS** in 2016 suicide accounted for 19% of deaths among youth aged 10-14 and 29% among youth aged 15 to 19.

**WHEREAS** the federal government introduced red flag legislation to combat self-harm involving firearms that allow people to apply to the court for immediate removal of an individual's firearm or ask to suspend or review an individual license to own firearms.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby all levels of government to work together to develop red flag legislation to combat mental illness in youth by allowing people, such as concerned citizens and relatives, to apply to the court for immediate intervention for youth in danger of themselves and place them in a safer environment for treatment.

**Resolution Background:**

We have red flag laws for guns where I can raise a concern over anyone and have them arrested but there is NO such thing in mental health which is especially needed for the 16–18-year gap. At 16 you can't go to a bar - vote or buy cigarettes etc. but you can decide if you live or die.

We would like to propose a RED flag law especially for this age group whereby if several people and/or family members request it these young adults (who are still kids and our responsibility to protect) can be sent for help to break the drug cycle and change their environment for the better. At least give them a chance where letting them go just solidifies their bleak outlook and puts them back in a very dangerous situation - in our case for the worst ending possible and I'm dead certain we aren't the only ones affected thus.

## Ministry of Agriculture

### Gravel Resources on Crown Land

#### 29-23A | Rural Municipality of Dundurn No. 314

**WHEREAS** gravel resources within the province are becoming scarcer and municipalities are facing increased costs associated with availability and hauling of aggregate greater distances.

**WHEREAS** the Ministry of Agriculture enters into lease agreements with private individuals and corporations to extract gravel resources from Crown land at a below market value rate.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the Ministry of Agriculture to increase the gravel royalty on existing private lease holders to fair market value.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that SARM lobby the Ministry of Agriculture to place a moratorium on gravel resource expansion and development to private interests.

**Resolution Background:**

The Ministry of Agriculture has existing and will likely have future private leases for the extraction of aggregate resources from Crown Land usually for well below market value. As more municipalities are faced with scarce availability of gravel resources, it would be prudent to develop a system by which the Ministry of Agriculture provides municipalities with the first right of refusal on lease opportunities in the future, instead of it going into the private market. This would ensure that current leases are reviewed and reflect actual market value and will ensure that the province isn't depleting and selling a valuable resource at a discounted price.