

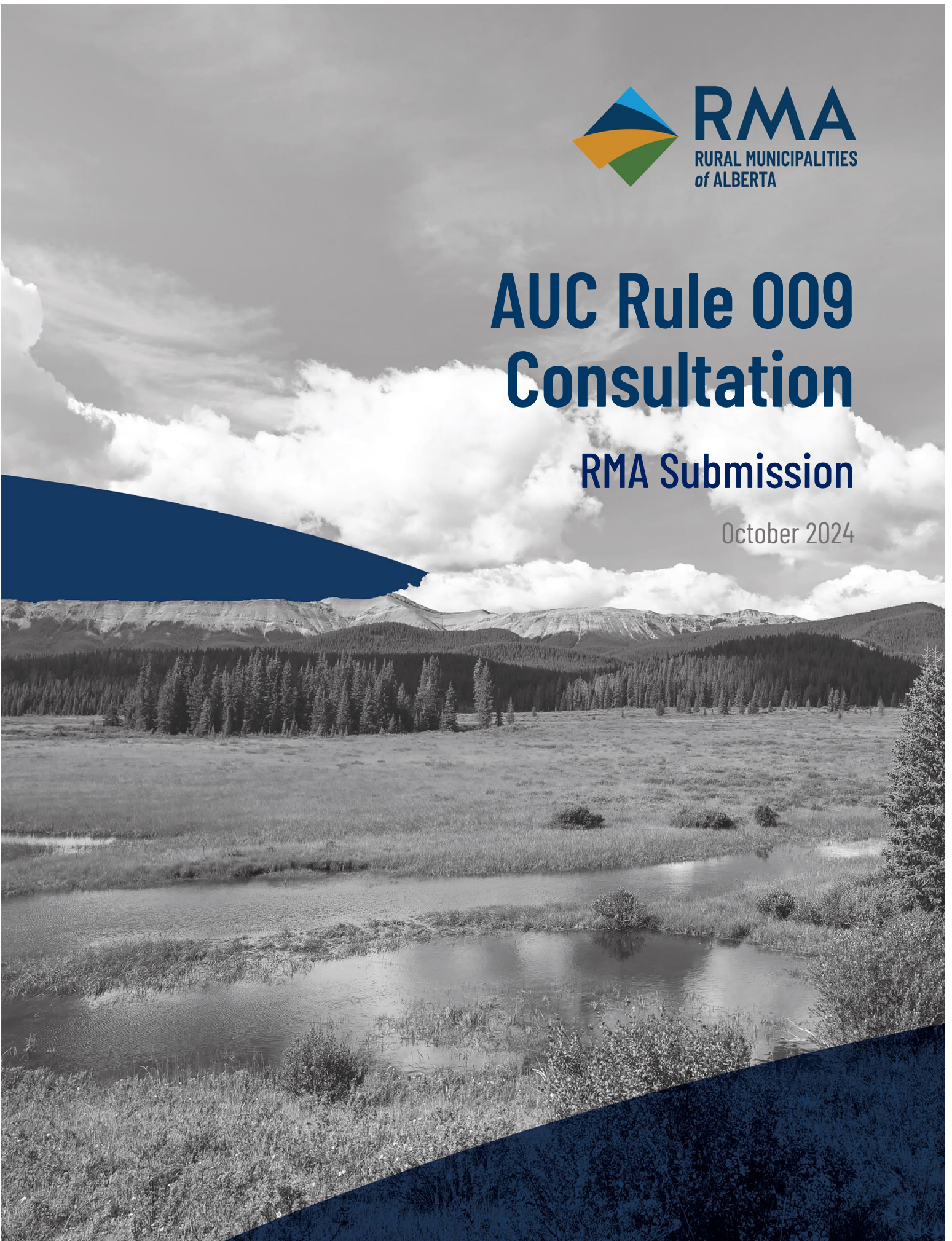


RMA
RURAL MUNICIPALITIES
of ALBERTA

AUC Rule 009 Consultation

RMA Submission

October 2024



Introduction

Who is the RMA?

The Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) advocates on behalf of Alberta's rural municipalities. RMA's members consist of 63 municipal districts and counties, five specialized municipalities, and the Special Areas Board. Although each municipality is unique, the RMA's 69 members have several common traits: large land masses, small populations, and a lack of a traditional "population center." RMA members provide municipal governance to approximately 85% of Alberta's land mass.

Municipal Costs

Municipalities differ from other interveners in AUC hearings. Municipalities bring professional staff with various areas of expertise and accompanying data to support their positions. Therefore, it is critical that consideration is given to the unique nature of municipalities and their participation in AUC hearings. With regards to municipalities claiming costs to participate in AUC hearings, RMA has the following feedback:

- ◆ The draft Rule 009 document states that municipalities are eligible to claim costs for staff time if they are not claiming other costs for lawyers or experts. Many municipalities will bring hired legal counsel to the hearings in addition to key municipal staff as their staff have the planning and agricultural expertise necessary to participate, but external legal support is required. Therefore, it is important that Rule 009 allows for municipalities to submit costs for both externally hired lawyers and internal municipal staff attending the hearing.
- ◆ The proposed \$300 per day for municipal staff to participate in hearings is inadequate to support municipal participation, especially considering that municipalities will likely have their CAO participate. RMA suggests this amount be increased to \$500 per day. Municipalities should be allowed to claim this cost per staff member for up to three participants. The rationale is that municipalities will likely be required to have, at minimum, their CAO, director of planning, and senior staff from their agriculture department participate. Each of these positions bring a different perspective that is required for fulsome participation in the hearing.
- ◆ The cap on costs for the development of inhouse submissions is too low. Based on experience from RMA members, this cost should be increased to a maximum of \$10,000.

Use of Agents at Hearings

With regards to the use of agents who are not lawyers participating in hearings, municipalities should have autonomy to choose who they wish to represent them at hearings. Municipalities regularly evaluate the services of professionals and are well suited to determine the background and qualifications necessary for their purposes. Therefore, RMA recommends that the AUC continue to allow agents who are not lawyers to represent parties at hearings.