

BRIEFING

Page 1 of 4

Item # 5.2.2

Deputy City Manager's Office Briefing to
Intergovernmental Affairs Committee
2021 May 13

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Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) Update – May 2021

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING

The City of Calgary (The City) is an active member within the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and this briefing memo is a monthly update to the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee (IGA) on their activities and The City's work within the AUMA on provincial issues

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Report on the AUMA's Spring 2021 Municipal Leaders' Caucus

The AUMA hosted their annual Spring Municipal Leaders' Caucus (SMLC), which was held virtually via Zoom from 2021 April 14 to 16. Attendees comprised of 419 Albertan municipal elected officials and members of municipal administrations.

Day 1: 2021 April 14

The agenda had sessions regarding cutting municipal red tape in cooperation with local business, the final report from the AUMA's economic resiliency and recovery task force and on municipal finances and reserves.

Day 2: 2021 April 15

Attendees listened to remarks from the Leader of the Official Opposition in the Alberta Legislature and sessions regarding the recent changes to municipal election legislation, the upcoming province-wide vote of the electors for this fall and on the AUMA's Principles of Local Democracy and their proposed initiative to promote those principals in the coming fall municipal election. AUMA President Barry Morishita gave a report on the activities of the AUMA, including recent work on Coal Policy, addictions and mental health, health care, provincial policing, rural broadband, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), the Future of Municipal Government research project and climate change. President Morishita also announced publicly that the AUMA is undertaking a branding review, with results being announced at the fall AUMA convention. There was also votes on submitted request for decisions (RFDs) by the attending elected officials.

Requests for Decisions (RFDs)

There were three submitted RFDs that were all approved by the majority of attendees. AUMA is now following up on these items. The RFDs were:

1. **Member RFD from the Town of Slave Lake - All Albertans Deserve Access to Justice** - That the AUMA advocate for the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to ensure the justice system is properly resourced so that all Albertans have timely and equitable access.

AUMA's Safe and Healthy Communities Committee will discuss the RFD at their April meeting and will provide an advocacy recommendation for consideration at the

BRIEFING

May AUMA Board meeting. The RFD compliments and expands AUMA's existing advocacy on policing and justice issues.

- 2. Member RFD from the Village of Forestburg - Local Government Funding Framework (LGFF) Implementation** - That the AUMA advocate for the provincial government to implement the proposed Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF) at the beginning of the province's 2023-24 fiscal year with the following amendment: Removal of the 50 per cent limitation in the revenue index factor calculation so that annual changes in LGFF funding is equivalent to annual changes in the Government of Alberta's revenue.

This RFD has already influenced AUMA's advocacy on the LGFF. It provided the opportunity for AUMA to pose a question to the Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Finance during the Ministerial Dialogue Session at MLC regarding removal of the 50 per cent growth limit. In addition, on April 23, AUMA's Board approved sending a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs requesting a meeting to explore improvements to the LGFF as outlined in the RFD.

- 3. Member RFD from the Village of Forestburg – Proposed Amendment to the Municipal Government Act – Division 5 Special Tax** - That the AUMA advocate for the provincial government to amend Section 382(1) of the Municipal Government Act to allow municipalities to pass a special tax bylaw to raise revenue to pay for policing services.

The RFD will inform AUMA's ongoing engagement with Municipal Affairs to advocate for enhancements to Alberta's property assessment and taxation regime. The Ministry indicates that it will conduct a red tape reduction review of MGA provisions related to assessment early next year. This provides the best chance to advocate for the legislation necessary to capture policing costs as a separate levy on municipal property tax notices. AUMA's Municipal Governance Committee is leading our advocacy on this file.

Principals of Local Democracy

In early 2020, the Government of Alberta launched a review of the Local Authorities Election Act (LAEA). To guide AUMA's input, the organization developed principles regarding local elections which were overwhelmingly endorsed by AUMA members during a webinar last June. These were:

- Prevent big money from manipulating local elections by setting contribution limits that are achievable and realistic for grassroots supporters
- Allow municipalities to continue setting bylaws for candidates to disclose their full donor list and the amounts contributed before the municipal election date in 2021
- Make third-party advertising accountable by outlining clear declarations of contributors and by limiting the contribution amounts

AUMA forwarded these principals as recommendations to the Government of Alberta and was disappointed when the Government of Alberta ignored them in the legislation that were brought forward in the fall to amend the LAEA.

AUMA remains committed to these democratic principles and the AUMA Board proposed opportunities to the membership at the SMLC on how they could collectively promote and advocate for them over the coming summer and fall of 2021.

First, the AUMA Board proposed expanding the original principles of Local Democracy to highlight the importance of respect in democratic discourse. Given the significant anecdotal evidence that the toxicity of political discourse both online and in person is a deterrent to seeking office for new and returning candidates. This was endorsed by the majority of attendees.

Second, the AUMA Board proposed that the AUMA and its members encourage municipal candidates and councils in the coming fall election to make commitments to live out some of these principles in their campaigns. Adding this additional principle would complement the campaign being run by Quebec's municipal association. Their campaign is called "Respect in Democracy is Respecting Democracy" and it encourages Quebec municipalities to adopt a declaration of commitment to respectful, democratic debate.

AUMA believes that local elections should provide an opportunity for candidates and voters to demonstrate their continuing commitment to sharing their perspectives and seeking to understand differences without resorting to malicious attacks. The AUMA proposes this Pledge for Council and candidates to adopt the fall 2021 Election:

- Keep local elections local
- Maintain independence and non-partisanship
- Demonstrate transparency
- Engage in respectful dialogue

This proposal was also endorsed by the majority of attendees at the online SMLC meeting. The AUMA will provide further details and materials to the membership later in the spring on this matter.

Third, the AUMA sees opportunity to use the principles as a benchmark against which to assess the outcomes of the 2021 municipal elections and determine if further changes are needed to the LAEA.

Municipal Vote of Electors

In the past, AUMA has not been engaged in advocacy related to plebiscites, nor have they encouraged municipalities to pose questions directly to voters. However, with the Government of Alberta indicating they will be placing province-wide questions on the ballot, there is a new opportunity for municipalities to collaborate and ask questions of their own. The AUMA Board did a straw poll of the attendees if they would be interested in the AUMA coordinating a municipal focused question in the fall. The majority of attendees voted they were not in favour of the AUMA taking on that role.

Day 3: 2021 April 16

Participants heard remarks from the Alberta Premier Jason Kenney and from several Ministers who participated in a two-hour long question and answer ministerial dialogue session. Ministers attending included: Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board Travis Toews; Minister of Municipal Affairs (acting) and Minister of Transportation Ric McIver; Minister of Environment

BRIEFING

Page 4 of 4

Item # 5.2.2

and Parks Jason Nixon; Minister of Community and Social Services Rajan Sawhney; Minister of Infrastructure Prasad Panda; Minister of Seniors and Housing Josephine Pon; and Associate Minister of Mental Health & Addictions Jason Luan.

SMLC Resources

At the start of each day's agenda there was a short presentation on mental health. The slide decks and presentations from all session the SMLC are available on [the AUMA's website](#).

Reminder – Deadline for Resolutions for the fall AUMA Convention

If a municipality has identified any issue that may be a priority for municipalities throughout Alberta, AUMA reminds municipal councils to consider submitting a resolution for discussion at AUMA's Fall Convention: 2021 November 17 to 19. The deadline for submission of resolutions is 2021 June 30.