

**Deputy City Manager's Office Report to
Intergovernmental Affairs Committee
2021 June 17**

**ISC: UNRESTRICTED
IGA2021-0865
Page 1 of 4**

Resolution for AUMA Fall 2021 Convention – Improved Municipal-Provincial Emergency Collaboration

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee recommends that Council:

Approve submitting the resolution contained in Attachment 1 to the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association's (AUMA) Fall 2021 Convention and Annual General Meeting 2021 November 17 to 19.

HIGHLIGHTS

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (the pandemic), there has been a lack of proactive communication and meaningful engagement from the Government of Alberta (the Province) towards The City of Calgary (The City), Calgary Emergency Management Agency (CEMA), other Alberta municipalities and their emergency management organizations. This has resulted in negative outcomes for Albertans. Unlike traditional emergency management processes, where local authorities play a leadership role within their jurisdiction and are provided support by the Province (through the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA)) in a collaborative manner, during the pandemic there has been very little opportunity for municipalities to provide advanced input on public health measures, provincial decisions, ministerial orders even though these have had significant consequences at the local level and requires Alberta's municipalities to implement and enforce.

There have been several occasions over the past 15 months where if municipalities could have either provided input into the drafting of orders or were given advanced notice of their issuing would have prevented confusion and improved the efficiency of implementation of orders.

As the pandemic ends it is important for organizations to review their emergency response, to proactively conduct a lessons learned review, identify issues and deficiencies and look towards improving plans and best practices (including but not exclusive to issues of emergency response, the drafting and issuing of health orders, improved communication between orders of government, business supports, clarification of essential services, review of financial aid programs, value of municipal stimulus program, consideration of multiple scales of response and recovery (urban, rural, Indigenous) and review of vaccination and mass casualty planning), so to be better prepared when a similar emergency occurs in the future.

The City is recommending that Council submit a resolution to the 2021 Fall Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) Convention on improving municipal-provincial emergency collaboration. Calling on the Government of Alberta to work with municipalities on a review of the 2020-2021 pandemic response together and put in place mechanisms to improve future emergency communications and collaboration between the Province, Alberta's municipalities and their emergency management organizations (Attachment 1).

- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A well-run city

DISCUSSION

The City and CEMA have positive working relationships with their operational counterparts at the Province; however, the decision-making process that was adopted by the Province for the pandemic has limited the ability of both parties to effectively collaborate.

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During the pandemic, Calgary and other municipalities rarely, if ever, received any formal advance notice of the details and timing of public health measures before they were announced. The City has had to find out details of measures through press conferences at the same time as the public. If The City and Alberta's municipalities were allowed at least a few hours advanced notice to prepare for the impacts of the decisions or, preferably could have provided input into the drafting of certain orders that required municipal participation, it would have materially improved our pandemic communications and response. This lack of collaboration has been the source of major challenges for implementation of public health measures for City services, pandemic communications and public engagement, and enforcement of health measures and orders by local enforcement agencies.

Although The City recognizes the Province's mandate to lead public health and pandemic response, and that protracted engagement with every municipality in Alberta would be a challenge, communication flow needs to be improved for future incidents. Especially considering that Calgary has roughly a quarter of the population of Alberta and led the province in active cases throughout much of the pandemic.

The pandemic response did not just include the issues regarding timely communication between different orders of government, the drafting and execution of public health orders and public communications. The wider pandemic response included supports and financial aid for individuals, businesses and municipalities to meet immediate short-term challenges and support long-term post-pandemic recovery. The wider pandemic response required the continuation of essential services under difficult circumstances which raised the issues of which services should be prioritized and at what level of service continued. During the pandemic both location specific and province-wide orders and measures were enacted (in urban, rural, and indigenous settings) and their utility and effectiveness must be understood to improve future responses in similar emergency situations.

City Administration is recommending a comprehensive review of the pandemic response in cooperation with the Province and Alberta's municipalities to find solutions to these issues and improve emergency communications, collaboration and coordination going forward into the future. A permanent advisory group made up of members from Alberta's Emergency Management organizations and other key stakeholders could provide a resource to aid Provincial decision making and improve municipal-provincial collaboration, coordination and communications.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- ☐ Public Engagement was undertaken
- ☒ Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- ☒ Public/Stakeholders were informed
- ☒ Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

Discussion between internal stakeholders CEMA, Community Standards, Intergovernmental and Corporate Strategy, the Mayor's Office and their equivalents within other Alberta municipalities and their emergency management agencies led to development of the attached resolution and the recommendation contained within this report.

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IMPLICATIONS

Social

Improved communications and collaboration between The City, Alberta's municipalities and the Province during an emergency, such as the pandemic, would improve effectiveness of public communication and implementation of provincial orders and other support measures, aiding the health, safety and security of Albertans.

Environmental

Not applicable

Economic

Public health measures during the Pandemic have had significant impact on local business. Confusion resulting from poor communications or poorly drafted orders placed additional stress on local business and on City agencies that are obligated to implement the orders. Improving municipal-provincial communications, especially to provide timely clarity of orders' interpretation, would help improve implementation and mitigate some of the negative economic impacts such orders may have on business. The wider pandemic response included supports and financial aid for individuals, businesses and municipalities to meet immediate short-term challenges and support long-term post-pandemic recovery. Both location specific and province-wide orders and measures were enacted at various stages of the pandemic. Reviewing their effectiveness and utility of pandemic programs and various measures will improve future emergency responses that impact upon the economy.

Service and Financial Implications

No anticipated financial impact

No immediate impact on operational or capital budgets.

RISK

The City has already endured significant risk during the pandemic as has been outlined within this report. Undertaking a comprehensive lessons learned review of the pandemic response and improving municipal-provincial communications would mitigate future risks if we should enter into another similar public health emergency situation.

ATTACHMENT

1. City of Calgary Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) Resolution - Improved Municipal- Provincial Emergency Collaboration and Communications

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**ISC: UNRESTRICTED
IGA2021-0865
Page 4 of 4**

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Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Chris Arthurs	Deputy City Manager's Office	Approve
Katie Black	Community Services	Inform
Susan Henry	CEMA	Consulted