

Alberta Municipalities Update – February 2024 (Verbal)

Recommendation

That the Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) Committee recommend that Council receive this verbal report and distribution for the Corporate Record.

Sponsoring Resolutions

Alberta Municipalities (ABmunis) members can now submit resolutions to be debated at the 2024 Convention, taking place from September 24 to 27 in Red Deer. The deadline for 2024 resolutions is 2024 May 31.

There is a change to the ABmunis resolution process in 2024. Beginning this year, the mover municipality and the seconder municipality must represent at least two of the following population categories:

- Less than 2,500 population
- 2,500 to 10,000 population
- Greater than 10,000 population

In the example provided, if the moving municipality has a population of 7,000, then the seconder municipality must be less than 2,500 population or greater than 10,000 population.

Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF)

The provincial government made an announcement regarding the LGFF allocation formula on 2023 December 15. ABmunis acknowledged that the announced formula reflects many of the principles developed by ABmunis in an attempt to provide stable, predictable, adequate and legislated funding for local infrastructure projects. ABmunis expressed disappointment that 'LGFF in its current form fails to achieve any of the province's three stated objectives – increased economic growth, increased livability and increased resiliency.' ABmunis highlighted an approximately \$1 billion shortfall in baseline funding. ABmunis indicated it will continue advocating for a better deal and that it expects the provincial government to announce an increase to the annual LGFF amount in its 2024 provincial budget, anticipated to be tabled on 2024 February 29.

Provincial Request for Federal Agreements

The Minister for Municipal Affairs, Ric McIver, requested information on 2022 municipal-federal agreements via an emailed letter to municipalities across Alberta in 2023 December. The deadline for response was 2024 January 31. In an official statement, ABmunis highlighted concerns raised by members and requested clarification for what the provincial government 'hopes to accomplish through this unusual request for information.'

Drought

The Minister for Environment and Protected Areas Rebecca Schulz sent a letter to elected municipal officials in 2023 December highlighting required preparations for drought in 2024. The provincial government has created a Drought Command Team and drafted a 2024 Drought Emergency Plan. Municipalities are required to: proactively monitor water supply infrastructure, review terms of their water licences, develop a water shortage plan, and prepare municipal water

managers to engage with the Drought Command Team. Calgary and ABmunis representatives will be taking part in provincial drought meetings currently scheduled in 2024 February and March. ABmunis is currently reviewing all its water policies and has prioritized updating its water conservation targets to encourage further water conservation.

Political Parties in Municipal Elections

On 2024 January 30, Postmedia shared the results of a Government of Alberta Survey, conducted in 2023, in which more than 70 per cent of respondents indicated opposition to putting political parties on municipal election ballots. Those results align with the findings of a survey conducted in 2023 September on behalf of ABmunis, which found approximately 68 per cent of respondents similarly opposed. In 2023, ABmunis adopted a resolution calling for political parties to stay out of municipal elections.

Seniors Lodge Panel

On 2024 January 18, Jason Nixon, Alberta's Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services announced a Seniors Lodge Review panel comprising 11 members, including ABmunis President Tyler Gandam and Silvera for Seniors President and CEO Arlene Adamson.

The Seniors Lodge Program supports 10,850 lodge units in 149 lodges across Alberta. The intent of the panel has been stated 'to improve the lodge system's efficiency and sustainability into the future.' ABmunis' position is that the Seniors Lodge Program needs more provincial funding.

Upcoming Events

2024 Spring Municipal Leaders' Caucus (SMLC) – The SMLC is taking place at the Westin Hotel in Edmonton on 2024 March 14-15. This event will bring Alberta's municipal elected officials and senior administrative leadership together to cover key, top-of-mind issues facing municipalities, and provide an opportunity to connect with provincial leadership.

Author: Matt Zabloski, Intergovernmental Relations
General Manager Chris Arthurs concurs with the information in this verbal update.