

Alberta Municipalities Update – March 2024 (Verbal)

Recommendation

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

Sponsoring Resolutions

A reminder that 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.

The process for sponsoring ABmunis resolutions requires sponsorship through a Notice of Motion to be approved by Council. Every resolution must be sponsored by a mover and seconder municipality.

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.

Spring Municipal Leaders' Caucus

More than 300 municipal representatives from across the province met in Edmonton on March 14 and 15. The event offered the opportunity for networking, and the passing of two Requests for Decision which focused on Rural Economic Development Alliances and increasing support for developing childcare spaces.

Most of the attention of the event centered around sessions providing attendees the ability to direct questions to most of the provincial cabinet and premier. During these question-and-answer sessions, there was further insight provided on several provincial initiatives:

- Minister of Municipal Affairs, Ric McIver indicated that his department is 'already' conducting a review of recall legislation after concerns were raised over its weaponization.
- Minister of Environment and Protected Areas, Rebecca Schulz indicated that her team was considering several ways to help address the looming drought including the potential for stormwater reuse and inter-basin transfers.
- Minister of Affordability and Utilities, Nathan Neudorf indicated that his team is aware of concerns around the regulated rate and is looking at how best to address the many issues associated with it. His department is expecting to engage industry later this spring.
- Deputy Premier and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services, Mike Ellis clarified that recently introduced legislation to elevate provincial sheriffs to a standalone police force was not intended to replace but rather augment work being done by the

RCMP and municipal police forces. In a public statement, ABmunis representatives raised concerns over where the funding for this new police agency would come from.

- Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors, Devin Dreeshen, indicated that his department is developing a 'Resource Royalty Roadmap' with the intent of directing non-renewable resource revenues to the rural areas where they are produced.
- Finally, Premier Danielle Smith indicated that anticipated legislation to introduce political parties to municipal elections may begin with a 'pilot project' starting with Alberta's large cities. Minister McIver had also clarified that municipal political parties would not be allowed to be affiliated with a provincial or federal party. Premier Smith indicated she would consider a suggested change to the education property tax rate to average assessment values over several years to mitigate large swings in property value.

Budget 2024

ABmunis provided an official statement on the 2024 provincial budget which:

- Expressed disappointment over the \$1 billion shortfall in provincial funding for the Local Governance Fiscal Framework, indicating that "This continues the trend of inadequate provincial investments in community infrastructure being hundreds of millions of dollars below historical levels."
- Highlighted that the 9.2 per cent increase to provincial education property taxes in 2024-2025 far surpasses the 4.7 per cent year-over-year change in Alberta Education's budgeted expenditures.
- Commended the provincial government's increased funding for drought and wildfire readiness; and
- Supported the increased funding for affordable housing, mental health and addiction, indicating that it represents 'steps in the right direction' and stressed that it is unknown 'if these steps are big enough.'

Upcoming Events

Members of Alberta Municipalities' Board of Directors be attending the April 10 meeting of the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee to provide their annual update.

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General Manager Chris Arthurs concurs with the information in this verbal update.

