

Municipal Governance

During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Frequently Asked Questions – January 8, 2021

While we continue to navigate the ever-evolving COVID-19 pandemic together, Municipal Affairs remains committed to issuing regular updates to address frequently asked questions and provide new information or resources as they become available. For the most up-to-date information on the COVID-19 situation in Alberta, visit alberta.ca/COVID19.

If you would like a specific issue addressed in an upcoming update, please email your request to ma.lgsmail@gov.ab.ca.

Municipal Affairs Updates

Previous COVID-19 updates are available online at: www.alberta.ca/municipal-government-resources.aspx

COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

Is there an update to the plan to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine in Alberta?

YES. In December, Premier Kenney announced the launch of the COVID-19 vaccine task force responsible for distributing vaccines. More than 56 per cent of vaccine doses in stock have been administered as of this week.

Up-to-date information on the phased implementation plan and additional information Albertans need to know about the vaccine is available at www.alberta.ca/covid19-vaccine.aspx.

Has it been determined in what phase of the vaccine roll-out plan that the vaccine will be available to municipal first responders and firefighters?

NO. The vaccination roll-out started on December 15, 2020. The [roll-out plan](#) involves three phases. Phase 1A includes health-care workers in home care and emergency departments.

Phase 1B will begin in February and include:

- Seniors 75 and over
- First Nations, Métis and persons 65 years of age and over living in a First Nations community or Metis Settlement
- Health-care workers in medical, surgical and COVID-19 units or operating rooms

The second phase is scheduled to start in April 2021 and will continue targeting populations in sequence. At this time, the order of vaccinating populations has not been defined.

Phase three is targeted for Fall 2021 and involves the roll-out to the general public.

Public Libraries Resources

Resources are available at: <https://www.alberta.ca/public-library-services.aspx>

Municipal Elections

Due to the ongoing pandemic, are legislative changes being considered for the *Local Authorities Election Act (LAEA)* for the upcoming municipal elections?

YES. Municipal Affairs has met with key municipal stakeholders to discuss potential risks relating to the 2021 municipal general election and have identified some temporary modifications that could be made, if needed, to specific requirements under the *LAEA*. An example is the approval of Ministerial Order No. MSD: 130/20, enabling nomination deposits to also be paid by debit or credit card. The need for certain modifications will continue to be monitored and reviewed to ensure municipalities will have the appropriate ability to align election operations with public health orders or recommendations.

The nomination period began January 1, 2021. As a way to avoid in-person contact, can candidates submit nomination papers electronically?

NO. Currently, nomination papers cannot be submitted electronically. In addition to being delivered in person, the specific requirement of section 28 of the *LAEA* to submit nomination forms to the local jurisdiction office can be met by having forms mailed or delivered by courier. Nomination forms can also be accepted at specific times set by the returning officer, by appointment, or at a secure drop-off box.

Council Meetings

Can councils still hold council meetings in-person with members of the public present?

YES. Since municipal council meetings are business meetings and not social meetings, they can be held in person, including with members of the public; however, because of the elevated risk, it is strongly recommended to move to virtual meeting formats wherever possible.

Is the Public Meeting Procedures (COVID-19 Suppression) Regulation still in effect?

YES. The Public Meeting Procedures (COVID-19 Suppression) Regulation remains in effect until it has been repealed. The [regulation](#) enables municipalities to follow the Chief Medical Officer of Health's orders for physical/social distancing by conducting meetings electronically. While councils are encouraged to consider electronic meetings to ensure compliance with the public health orders regarding public gatherings, the decision on how to conduct meetings remains at the discretion of the council, committee or commission, while ensuring the process used complies with current public health orders.

General Questions

Has a timeline been established as to when the current public health measures will be changed?

NO. On January 7, 2020, it was announced that the current public health measures that came into effect on December 13, 2020, are extended and will remain in place until at least January 21, 2021. These provisions and the situation will be evaluated closer to January 21, 2021.

Are there different authority levels for the ongoing enforcement of current restrictions?

YES. Enforcement is currently undertaken by several different authorities. Alberta Health Services Public Health Inspectors respond to business-related complaints and continuing care complaints.

Response to any time-sensitive complaints about distancing, social gatherings, and isolation breaches can be made by:

- Police Officers
- Uniformed Community Peace Officers Level 1
- Uniformed Alberta Peace Officers Level 2

As the warm weather continues, our outdoor recreation and skating facilities continue to be popular destinations. Has there been any further clarification made to the guidelines of use for these municipal facilities and on outdoor skating?



YES. On December 23, 2020, Dr. Deena Hinshaw signed [Order 44-20](#), which helps clarify the use of outdoor rinks and outdoor group physical activity, including hockey, and other concerns brought forward by municipalities.

Section 38(2) provides additional clarity, and states “...a person may participate in an outdoor group physical activity consisting of less than 10 persons if a minimum physical distance of 2 metres between all participants is maintained at all times.”

Is there a timeline established for when municipalities may reopen arenas?

NO. CMOH [Order 42-2020](#) is in effect until at least January 21, 2021.

How long arenas will remain closed will be determined at the same time the stronger health measures put in place on December 13, 2020 are re-evaluated.

Renovations and construction continue during the pandemic. Inspections under the *Safety Codes Act* are still necessary. Are there public health measures that impact our safety codes officers?

YES. Safety codes officers can continue inspections. Officers must mask while inspecting indoor public spaces, including construction sites, and can enter occupied houses for the purpose of inspection, according to CMOH Order 42-2020.

Are Volunteer Fire Departments allowed to continue training?

YES. Volunteer fire departments are permitted to undertake training activities as long as appropriate protocols are being followed. If this training can be safely delayed until mid-January when the current measures are expected to be reviewed, then delaying is recommended.



Additional Resources

The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) continue to be a valuable resource for municipalities.

RMA's COVID-19 response hub is available at <https://rmaalberta.com/about/covid-19-response-hub>.

AUMA's updated guide is available at www.auma.ca/covid19.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities also has a list of links and resources for municipalities available at www.fcm.ca/en/resources/covid-19-resources-municipalities.

For the most up-to-date information on the COVID-19 situation in Alberta, visit: www.alberta.ca/COVID19.

Alberta Biz Connect

Alberta Biz Connect provides workplace guidance and support to businesses and non-profits. The online tool also provides sector-specific guidelines to ensure businesses can reopen safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses with questions regarding the relaunch can [email the Biz Connect team](#). Common questions are also posted [online](#).