

Municipal Governance

During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Frequently Asked Questions – January 22, 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

Municipal Operations

Have there been any recent changes to the public health measures in place that affect municipal operations?

NO. However; public health measures continue to change based on the current situation. As of January 18, outdoor social gatherings can have up to ten people. Physical distancing of two metres should be maintained with members of other households. Outdoor recreation facilities will remain closed, with the exception of washrooms adjacent to outdoor recreation settings, ski facilities and outdoor rinks. These current measures are in place until further notice.

Should municipalities still be encouraging employees to work from home?

YES. The mandatory work from home order is determined by operational effectiveness. Employers need to consider what is effective for their operations. The intent is to limit the chance that people are coming into close contact with others.

Are masks mandatory while skating on municipal outdoor rinks and other public outdoor skating surfaces?



NO. Currently, physical exercise, including skating, is exempt from the masking mandate. Social distancing signs should be posted.

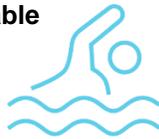
Users who are not in the same household should remain at least two metres apart while on the ice, and entering and exiting the ice surface.

Is there a plan in place for the reopening of municipal open space gathering/multi use summer spaces?

YES. The reopening of summer recreation activities such as beaches, campgrounds and farmers markets is dependent on COVID-19 case numbers.

Alberta Health continues to monitor and prepare for the upcoming spring and summer months.

Are municipal aquatic centers now able to open at a lower capacity?



NO. The current measures, which include restrictions to public access to a wide range of businesses, reflect the seriousness of the public health emergency. The decision to restrict public access to fitness facilities and aquatic centres was not made lightly. Alberta Health is continuously monitoring the impact of the restrictions to determine when and how they should be adjusted.

COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

Is there a resource that municipalities can use to track the progress of the vaccine rollout?

YES. The Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services are working hard to immunize Albertans as quickly and safely as possible. Please see the vaccination tracker provided by the Government of Canada for Alberta's vaccination progress: <https://covid19tracker.ca/vaccinationtracker.html>

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.

On January 11th, the Premier announced the addition of paramedics and EMRs in Phase 1 of the vaccine rollout plan. Is there a process they must follow to get a vaccine?

YES. Alberta Health Services (AHS) has created a [COVID-19 immunization online booking tool](#) to arrange immunization of newly eligible health-care workers to book their COVID-19 immunization appointments online from their phones or computers. Not all paramedics and EMRs are eligible, but those who are eligible should have received an email with a link to book an appointment.

Municipal Elections



Are there going to be COVID-19 specific requirements or process modifications for the upcoming municipal elections?

YES. Guidance for campaign-related activities is currently available online at [Guidance for Canvassing and Campaigning](#). All public health measures and restrictions in effect at the time of the election (summer village elections as early as June) would apply, including masking and distancing requirements. Section 28 (c) of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) [Order 42-2020](#) permits businesses or entities that have otherwise been ordered closed to the public to remain open for elections purposes and related activities.

In addition to delivering nomination forms 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.

Ministerial Order No. MSD: 130/20, remains in effect and enables 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.

Are there new election forms available?

YES. The nomination form (Form 4) and the newly amended Candidate Financial Information Form (Form 5) are now available online at <https://www.alberta.ca/municipal-election-forms.aspx>.

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.

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](#).

General Questions

Is there additional resources available summarizing the recent amendments made to the *Municipal Government Act* and the *Local Authorities Election Act* that impact Alberta's municipalities?

YES. To assist municipalities in understanding these amendments, Municipal Affairs has also developed more detailed FAQ documents related to the recent amendments. These FAQs can be found online at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/municipal-government-act-amendments-2020-red-tape-reduction>.

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.

Municipal Advisory Services

If you have further questions, please call: 780-427-2225 or toll-free by first dialing 310-0000 or email ma.lgsmail@gov.ab.ca