

Municipal Governance

During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Frequently Asked Questions – March 5, 2021-CORRECTION

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.

Step 2 restriction changes for indoor fitness and libraries came into effect March 1. All other restrictions remain in effect. 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.

Election Resources

Municipal Affairs has published a guide for conducting municipal elections during the COVID-19 pandemic, available for download at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/2021-municipal-election-covid-19-risk-reduction-guide>.

Public Health Order

Is the State of Public Health Emergency still in effect?

NO. The Official Public Health Emergency has expired. Discussions are ongoing on whether a state of emergency needs to be reinstated.

With the expiration of the provincial public health emergency, can community peace officers be authorized to enforce the Chief Medical Officer of Health's (CMOH) COVID-19 orders?

YES. On March 4, 2021 the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General issued a new Ministerial Order (MO 13/2021) pertaining to the enforcement of the CMOH Orders through the *Public Health Act (PHA)*.

Given there is no current declared provincial state of emergency, section 13(1.1) of the *Peace Officer Act* cannot be used for enforcement. Peace officers and their employers must consent to enforcing the CMOH's Orders through the *PHA* per section 13(1) of the *Peace Officer Act*. The decision to utilize this extended authority is the employers' and peace officers' to determine. While there is no requirement to submit consent to the Peace Officer Program if the decision is made to enforce the CMOH's Orders through the *PHA*, enforcement activities must be reported to poprogram@gov.ab.ca in accordance to the direction provided in November 2020.

The RCMP or public health inspectors remain authorized to enforce orders issued under the *Public Health Act*.

Municipal Affairs Updates

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

General Questions

Should councillors still be encouraged to wear masks during council meetings even if we have the space to social distance and/or have barriers in place?

YES. Masks are required to be worn indoors at all times, unless individuals are at a workstation and separated from others. If each individual seated in chambers is separated by two metres from all others then masks could be removed; however, it is highly recommended masks remain on for all in-person meetings. At this time, virtual meetings continue to be encouraged wherever possible.

Are municipalities responsible in any way for use of their community halls in contravention of the order or parameters of use under the Public Health Order?

YES. Community hall operators are responsible for any contravention to public health orders that occur within their premises. If the community hall operator is the municipality, then the municipality would be held responsible.

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](#).

Are community hall kitchens allowed to be used if the hall itself is not being used?

YES. CMOH Order 2-2021 Section 43(j) allows a location to be utilized for charitable activities including, but not limited to, food, clothing, and toy collection and distribution.

As municipalities work with outdoor festival organizers to ensure they have plans for different formats, will it be possible to get information on what the possible restrictions will be for these events?

YES. Information will be made available as soon as possible. Outdoor festivals and events are currently in Step 4 of the Path Forward. There is no indication at this time of what potential summer festivals may look like; however, Alberta Health is working with representatives of summer festivals to provide up-to-date information and ensure they understand their planning needs.

At this time, the limit on outdoor social gatherings remains capped at 10 people, and this restriction is in place province-wide.

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://rmalberta.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.