

# Municipal Governance

## During the COVID-19 Outbreak

Frequently Asked Questions – May 1, 2020

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The state of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on municipalities continues to change on a daily basis. As we navigate these challenging times together, Municipal Affairs will continue to support and provide regular updates addressing frequently asked questions and providing information on new tools as they become available.

### Municipal Affairs Updates

Previous COVID-19 updates are available at [www.alberta.ca/municipal-government-resources.aspx](http://www.alberta.ca/municipal-government-resources.aspx)

## Education Property Tax Deferral

**Is additional information now available to supplement the April 15, 2020 education property tax deferral webinars?**

**YES.** A frequently asked question document has been prepared and it will be updated as required. The document is available on the following link.

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/frequently-asked-questions-non-residential-property-tax-deferral>.

For any questions about the tax deferral program you can contact a program advisor toll-free by dialing 310-0000, then 780-422-7125, or by emailing [taxprogramdelivery@gov.ab.ca](mailto:taxprogramdelivery@gov.ab.ca).

## Procurement

**Is there additional information available arising out of the Premier's April 9, 2019 town hall meeting in regards to ways to expedite contracts for shovel-ready projects?**

**YES.** During the town hall meeting, Premier Kenney stated that the Government of Alberta is discussing with other Premiers the potential of suspending tendering provisions in the New West Partnership Trade Agreement in order to speed the ordinary procurement process for municipalities. Currently, Alberta Economic Development, Trade and Tourism is undertaking this initiative.

The Government of Alberta is working on comprehensive plans to address the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a wide range of complex issues that must be addressed in a coordinated fashion, including those related to municipalities. We expect to have more information to share on this shortly.

### Municipal Advisory Services

If you have further questions, please contact us at:

780-427-2225

or toll-free by first dialing 310-0000

or email [ma.lgsmail@gov.ab.ca](mailto:ma.lgsmail@gov.ab.ca)

## Recreational Camping

### Will recreational camping be permitted soon?

**YES.** On April 30, 2020 Premier Jason Kenney announced a staged relaunch strategy of the Alberta economy. This announcement effects campground operations.

The province has a goal to have some provincial campsites open by June 1. No washrooms or garbage pickup will be immediately available within provincial parks. Campground facility access restrictions to areas such as showers, picnic and cooking shelters will posted on [albertaparks.ca](http://albertaparks.ca)

Alberta Parks' online reservation system will be available May 14, while private and municipal campgrounds can reopen under their own authority.

Appropriate physical distancing must still be in place.

### Are Albertans permitted to use provincial campgrounds for day use?



**YES.** Day use is permitted. Vehicle access to parking lots and staging areas in parks and on public lands will begin on Monday, May 4, 2020. Group and comfort camping will not be offered.

### Can Albertans visit their summer homes, cottages and cabins?

**YES.** Although there is no legislation currently in place to restrict Albertans from using their property, the Chief Medical Officer of Health encourages Albertans to refrain from visiting their summer homes, cottages and cabins. This will help to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 and limit the strain on health care, emergency response and essential services in smaller communities.

## General Questions

### Both the provincial and federal governments are announcing a variety of supports to assist municipalities in addressing challenges and financial strains resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Where can we find more information on these programs?

All previous municipal governance updates from Municipal Affairs are available at <https://www.alberta.ca/municipal-government-resources.aspx#toc-0>.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has also compiled a list of links and resources for municipalities. <https://fcm.ca/en/resources/covid-19-resources-municipalities>.

In addition, Alberta municipal associations have provided comprehensive resources to assist members during the pandemic. The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association has developed a webpage to act as a quick first reference with links to credible sources for up-to-date information at <https://auma.ca/business-services/employee-benefits/employers/covid-19>. The Rural Municipalities of Alberta's COVID-19 response hub is accessible via <https://rmaalberta.com/about/covid-19-response-hub/>.

### Can municipal councils still meet in person and meet the Chief Medical Officer of Health's recommendations for physical/social distancing?

**YES.** The [Public Meeting Procedures \(COVID 19 Suppression\) Regulation](#) enables municipalities to follow the Chief Medical Officer of Health's recommendations for physical/social distancing by conducting meetings electronically. While Municipal Affairs encourages councils to consider electronic meetings as a way 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.

## Can police and community peace officers issue tickets to enforce COVID-19 public health orders?

**YES.** Through amendments to the *Public Health Act* and the *Procedures Regulation* under the *Provincial Offences Procedures Act*, both police and community peace officers level 1 are able to issue tickets to enforce COVID-19 public health orders.

The Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services are working with local enforcement agencies to manage complaints respecting any failures to comply with orders and restrictions. Alberta public health inspectors continue to be the first line of enforcement.

## Can a public health inspector directly issue fines?

**NO.** After receiving a complaint, health inspectors will request voluntary compliance. If that does not occur, they can contact law enforcement to enforce the *Public Health Act*. Health inspectors can also engage other regulatory bodies, such as Service Alberta, which could result in other regulatory and enforcement actions.

## Do municipalities receive any portion of the fines issued for a violation of a public health order?

**NO.** The fines collected in respect of violations of the *Public Health Act* belong to the province of Alberta. This follows the general rule set out in section 14(1) of the *Provincial Offences Procedures Act*.

Municipalities do not receive any portion of fines collected for violations of the *Public Health Act*. Only certain fines, such as those collected in respect of offences under the *Traffic Safety Act*, the *Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act*, and the *Tobacco Tax Act*, are payable to municipalities.



## Is the province developing an economic stimulus plan that will follow the COVID-19 pandemic?

**YES.** The province is currently considering further economic stimulus measures, including potential municipal capital projects. Additional information regarding economic stimulus plans will be shared when it becomes available.

## Is the province still accepting submissions for 'shovel-ready' projects?

**YES.** Supporting shovel-ready municipal infrastructure can stimulate rapid job creation and boost economic activity. The information collected from municipal submissions will enable us to gauge the magnitude of demand across the province and capacity of municipalities to undertake additional projects.

Information on your shovel-ready projects can be submitted directly to the Minister's office at [minister.municipalaffairs@gov.ab.ca](mailto:minister.municipalaffairs@gov.ab.ca), and copies sent to [ma.geptbranch@gov.ab.ca](mailto:ma.geptbranch@gov.ab.ca).

## Further Updates

We will continue to examine ways to support municipalities in navigating through this situation, and will provide further updates as new tools become available.