

# Municipal Governance

## During the COVID-19 Outbreak

Frequently Asked Questions – May 15, 2020

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The state of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on municipalities continues to evolve. The Province has announced Alberta's Relaunch Strategy and the Province, municipalities, and all Albertans must stay vigilant to continue to slow the spread by respecting the [guidelines](#) outlined by the chief officer of medical health. Balancing safety while gradually reopening businesses and resuming normal daily activities at home, work and play remains paramount but also poses many questions for municipal administrators and elected officials.

As Alberta continues down the road to recovery, Municipal Affairs will continue to support and provide bi-weekly 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)

## Emergency Management

Bill 13 has been signed and took effect on May 12, 2020. It further amends the *Emergency Management Act* to assist with the pandemic response. The changes provide greater clarity and improved coordination between local and provincial responses to pandemics, and future, province-wide emergencies.

**Does a council still have to have a meeting to renew a State of Local Emergency (SOLE) at the end of 7 days if it was declared as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

**NO.** As long as the resolution to declare a COVID-19 pandemic SOLE is passed after May 12, 2020, it does not expire at the end of 7 days. Bill 13 amended section 22(4) of the *Emergency Management Act* to state that a declaration of a state of local emergency lapses at the end of 7 days, **or at the end of 90 days if the declaration is in respect of a pandemic.**

**Did Bill 13 make other amendments to the *Emergency Management Act* that impact our municipality during the current pandemic?**

**YES.** Additional amendments include providing clear language that it is an offence to be noncompliant with orders made under states of local emergency or a provincial state of emergency and clarify additional authorities for the Minister.

### Alberta Emergency Management Agency

For questions please contact the Alberta Emergency Management Agency at 780-422-9000 or toll-free by first dialing 310-0000.



## Recreational Camping

**Is camping allowed in Provincial Parks this May long weekend?**

**NO.** Reservations relaunched on May 14 for arrivals starting June 1 onward at select provincial campgrounds and launch times are staggered by region. For further recreational camping information visit [AlbertaParks.ca](http://AlbertaParks.ca).

## Economic Relaunch

**The fluid nature of the relaunch timing and detail makes it challenging to stay current. Is there a resource available to help us navigate the relaunch?**

**YES.** The simplest way to stay up-to-date during the relaunch stages is to continue to visit [Alberta's Relaunch Strategy](#) webpage.

**Is there a guide available for businesses reopening in our municipality that can help them reopen and resume operations safely?**

**YES.** [Alberta Biz Connect](#) provides workplace guidance and support to businesses and non-profits. The online tool also provides sector-specific guidelines for those able to open in stage one of relaunch to ensure businesses can reopen safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Have a question?

If you have a specific question you would like answered in an upcoming update, please email your request to [ma.lgsmail@gov.ab.ca](mailto:ma.lgsmail@gov.ab.ca).

**Now that Stage 1 of [Alberta's Relaunch Strategy](#) has begun, are there key restrictions and measures that municipal administrators need to be aware of?**

**YES.** Municipal pools, recreation centres and arenas must remain closed. Public attendance at businesses, facilities and events that have close physical contact are also still not permitted, including: arts and culture festivals, major sporting events and concerts. Municipalities should also be strongly recommending the use of masks in public spaces that do not allow for physical distancing of 2 meters.

**Are municipal offices required to reopen during Stage 1 of the relaunch?**

**NO.** As an employer, it is up to each municipality to continue to ensure the health and safety of your employees while still enabling your essential services to operate. Remote working where possible is still advised. Prior to opening, employers must ensure they can operate within the recommended guidelines, and all workplaces are expected to develop and implement policies and procedures to address COVID-19.

**Can municipalities now open outdoor recreational facilities such as fields, playgrounds and courts for public use?**

**YES.** Like other municipal facilities, municipalities may choose to open outdoor recreation facilities if the recommended guidelines can be met such as routine cleaning and disinfecting outlined in both the [Guidance for Outdoor Recreation](#) and [Workplace Guidance for Business Owners](#) documentation. Groups must still be limited to 15 people or fewer and physical distancing of 2 metres must be maintained unless individuals are from the same family. At this time, league play is still not permitted.



**Are local restaurants, cafes, pubs and bars permitted to open during Stage 1?**



**YES.** Restaurants, cafes, pubs and bars can open but must operate at no more than 50% seating capacity. Operators must follow the [Workplace Guidance for Business Owners](#) and are required to follow the [Food Regulation](#) and [Food Retail and Foodservices Code](#).

**Do municipalities have a role to play in Alberta's Relaunch Strategy?**

**YES.** While provincial and federal governments may bring significant resources to support the management and recovery from a crisis, local municipalities are best suited to understand their own community composition and community needs. Community and business leaders are also the most invested in the long-term recovery of an affected municipality.

**Are there specific issues municipalities should consider as we plan our local relaunch strategy?**

**YES.** Returning a community to a new normal following a pandemic requires planning, monitoring, and adaptation to addressing ongoing and emerging issues. A recovery plan should address issues such as supporting the local economy, supporting the social needs of people in the community, returning municipal services to normal, or adjusting municipal service delivery to deal with the new normal, and protecting the environment. Municipalities should also consider ways that community members can meaningfully participate in its recovery activities to help build resilience within the municipality. Municipal Affairs is developing a Pandemic Response Planning Guide that will be available soon. The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association also hosted a webinar with Dr. Deena Hinshaw and other experts on May 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss with members what a "relaunch" means for municipal and community services. The recording of the webinar will be available on AUMA's [YouTube channel](#) this weekend.

**Has a date been set indicating how quickly Alberta can move to Stage 2?**

**NO.** Progression to Stage 2 will be determined by the success of Stage 1, considering health care system capacity, hospitalization and ICU cases and infection rates.

### 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)

### Additional Resources

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities continues to compile 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://rmalberta.com/about/covid-19-response-hub/>.

### Further Updates

We will continue to examine ways to support municipalities in navigating through this situation. Future updates will be issued on a bi-weekly basis unless there are issues arising that require urgent communication.