



2009 AUMA Policy Statement on Municipal Governance



INTRODUCTION

The AUMA provides value and leadership to its members. To that end, the Standing Committee on Municipal Governance reviews and suggests changes to provincial legislation governing municipal governments, works towards improved inter-municipal and inter-governmental relationships, examines issues regarding municipal taxation, assessment and citizen participation, and oversees the process of AUMA Convention resolutions.

The AUMA Policy Statement on Municipal Governance is a formal account of AUMA positions pertaining to municipal governance, as compiled from member resolutions adopted at the 2008 AUMA Annual Convention. The member resolutions addressed in this statement can be found in Annex 1.

Statement of Principles

AUMA Guiding Principles:

Principle 1.	Municipal Governments must have the fiscal capacity to fulfill their mandate through: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• primary access to the property tax base; and• sustainable, predictable, long-term sources of revenue
Principle 2.	The federal and provincial governments have sole responsibility for direct income redistribution programs and services.
Principle 3.	The primary focus of urban government is to provide locally oriented services to property and people.
Principle 4.	Each local urban council will maintain responsibility for the establishment of local standards of services to property and people
Principle 5.	Any new standards or requirements imposed by the provincial or federal orders of government must be fully funded by that order of government.
Principle 6.	Amendments and changes to legislation and regulations relating to municipal governments shall only proceed when AUMA has actively participated and agreed, through meaningful input in a review process.
Principle 7.	Responsible stewardship of our ecological systems is essential to the economic viability, quality of life, and sustainability of our community.
Principle 8.	Quality infrastructure is critical to supporting healthy, financially sustainable communities, and strengthens the quality of life for all Albertans, and is the foundation for the Alberta Advantage.

Municipal Governance Principles:

The last two general AUMA principles above are especially important to any discussion of municipal infrastructure, and the following specific principles support them.

Municipal Infrastructure Principles:

Good governance is key to broad sustainability of Alberta's municipalities.

Amendments to the Municipal Government Act must provide enabling powers to allow municipalities to act and operate individually and collectively, and provide adaptability and flexibility to accommodate different types of governance and service delivery.

Every municipal government must have adequate powers and financial and legal resources that other orders of government cannot alter unilaterally.

Municipal governments require the financial capacity to fulfill their mandates, and the services for which they are responsible should be financed through local taxation, fees and other revenue and a defined portion of provincial and federal taxes and fees.

Municipal governments require sustainable, adequate and equitable resources. The property tax is not sufficient to fund all infrastructure and services that municipal governments develop, provide and maintain.

Municipal governments require an improved and more effective relationship with other orders of government, one that is respectful, co-operative and aims to better the lives of citizens and their various communities. Effective engagement is needed on matters of interest to the Government of Alberta and municipal governments. The Provincial Government is urged to engage municipalities when it proposes changes to:

- i. local government legislation;
- ii. revenue transfers to municipalities; and
- iii. provincial policies and programs that will have a significant impact in relation to matters that are within municipal authority.

In order to be successful, municipal governments require involvement from the community. Through engaging the public in the decision-making process, municipalities are able to develop policies, programs, and initiatives that are accepted by various stakeholders while building trust within the community. Recent trends have shown that citizen participation in local decision-making is declining, and it is important that local governments seek new and interesting ways to engage their citizens. AUMA has provided an example of strong leadership and democracy in developing the Citizen Engagement Toolkit.

Land use decisions often affect more than one municipal government. AUMA is committed to bold and strong leadership for sustainable land use planning, and in order for sustainability to be achieved, multi-jurisdictional planning must be clarified and structured. The building of positive inter-municipal relationships requires a

common understanding of the roles of different types of municipal governments, the role of the provincial government and the development of provincial guidelines for land use.

Municipal partnerships should, and must include partnerships between AUMA and its sister organization, AAMDC. AUMA is proud to partner with the AAMDC on projects that make sense to carry out jointly.

Municipal governments see tremendous opportunity for co-operation and partnerships with First Nations/Aboriginal communities, in achieving a high quality of life for all Alberta citizens.

Municipal governments can and will be pro-active in providing a formalized education program for elected municipal officials through the Alberta Elected Officials Education Program Corporation.

AUMA Requests:

With regard to Provincial/Municipal relationships, AUMA requests that the Government of Alberta:

1. adopt the Framework for a Provincial-Municipal Sustainability Partnership Agreement. **(Policy Paper 2008.1).**

With regard to municipal legislation, AUMA requests that the Government of Alberta:

2. amend the *Local Authorities Election Act* to extend the term of municipal office from three years to four years and to change the date of a general election to be in the spring of the year. **(RESNs C.i.1 and C.i,2).**
3. adopt the proposed changes to the *Municipal Government Act* that are contained in AUMA's *Municipal Government Act* review, and urge the Government of Alberta to work with AUMA to implement the changes **(Policy Paper 2008.5).**
4. amend section 648(2) of the *Municipal Government Act* addressing off-site levies to add new or expanded facilities for fire rescue service, emergency medical service, police service, transit services and recreation and library service to the list of capital costs, thereby granting authority to municipalities to impose an essential services off-site levy to fully serve and complete new communities. **(RESN C.ii.3).**
5. amend the *Municipal Government Act* to broaden the statutory provisions by allowing municipalities to impose a local improvement tax on properties for the construction of potable water systems and appurtenances where the municipal council considers it to be in the public interest to do so, without the owners of the benefitting parcels of land being allowed to petition against the local improvement. In particular that: Section 408(1) and (2) be amended to add "...water mains and appurtenances" in addition to sewers. **(RESN C.ii.6).**
6. amend the *Municipal Government Act* to enact legislation to require all infrastructure improvements related to lands identified to be annexed from one Alberta municipality to another to have the approval of both Alberta municipalities before said improvements can be undertaken by a debenture **(RESN C.ii.7).**

7. amend the *Alberta Capital Finance Authority Act* to add seniors' Housing authorities as shareholders of the Alberta Capital Finance Authority **(RESN C.iii.3)**.
8. amend the *School Act* so that the onus is on the School board to obtain school declarations, thereby freeing up the municipal clerks from this very time consuming, repetitive and costly service **(RESN C.iv.4)**.

With regard to municipal revenues and taxation, AUMA requests that the Government of Alberta:

7. implement the following request:
 - The Government of Alberta assume all costs of Regional School Divisions;
 - The Government of Alberta discontinue ASFF requisition from local property taxes. **(RESN C.ii.2)**.
8. change its funding practices to help municipalities keep pace with the demands of rapid growth by applying the official Statistics Canada Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Alberta to adjust the total amount of per capita funding grants that it provides to municipalities each year. **(RESN C.ii.4)**.
9. table the Provincial Budget in the month of February of each year; and if that is impossible, then that the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association request the Government of Alberta to supply municipalities with education requisition funding requirements no later than the end of February each year. **(RESN C.iv.2)**.

With regard to inter-municipal planning and land use, AUMA requests that the Government of Alberta:

10. endorse the recommendations outlined in AUMA's Operationalizing Land Use Planning Policy Paper **(Policy Paper 2008.1)**.

2008 ADOPTED AUMA MEMBER RESOLUTIONS – Municipal Governance

Policy Paper 2008.1: Draft Framework for a Provincial/Municipal Sustainability Partnership Agreement

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AUMA 2008 Convention adopt the Framework for a Provincial-Municipal Sustainability Partnership Agreement and that securing provincial support for the Sustainability Partnership Agreement be an AUMA advocacy priority.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED

Policy Paper 2008.5: *Municipal Government Act* Review

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AUMA 2008 General Assembly adopt the proposed changes to the *MGA* that are contained in AUMA's *MGA* review, and urge the Government of Alberta to work with AUMA to implement the changes.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED

Policy Paper 2008.6: Operationalizing Land Use Planning in Alberta

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT AUMA urge the Government of Alberta to endorse the recommendations outlined in AUMA's *Operationalizing Land Use Planning Policy Paper*.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 2008.C.i.1: Amendment to the *Local Authorities Election Act* to Extend Terms for Municipal Office for Future Municipal General Elections

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AUMA urge the Provincial Government to amend the *Local Authorities Election Act* to extend the term of municipal office from three years to four years.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 2008.C.i.2: Amendment to Change the Date of Future Municipal General Elections

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the AUMA request the Provincial Government to amend the *Local Authorities Election Act* to change the date of a general election to be in the spring of the year.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 2008.C.ii.2: Alberta School Foundation Fund

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association request the Provincial Government to implement the following request:

1. The Government of Alberta assume all costs of Regional School Divisions; and that
2. The Government of Alberta discontinue ASFF requisition from local property taxes.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 2008.C.ii.3: Authorizing Off-Site Levy to Provide Essential Services and Build Complete Communities

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association request that the Government of Alberta amend section 648(2) of the *Municipal Government Act* addressing off-site levies to add new or expanded facilities for fire rescue service, emergency medical service, police service, transit services and recreation and library service to the list of capital costs, thereby granting authority to municipalities to impose an essential services off-site levy to fully serve and complete new communities.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED as amended

RESOLUTION 2008.C.ii.4: Provincial Per Capita Grant Programs: the Need to Adjust for Inflation

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association request that the Government of Alberta change its funding practices to help municipalities keep pace with the demands of rapid growth by applying the official Statistics Canada Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Alberta to adjust the total amount of per capita funding grants that it provides to municipalities each year.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 2008.C.ii.6: Local Improvement Tax for Water Mains

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association request the Government of Alberta to amend the *Municipal Government Act* to broaden the statutory provisions by allowing municipalities to impose a local improvement tax on properties for the construction of potable water systems and appurtenances where the municipal council considers it to be in the public interest to do so, without the owners of the benefitting parcels of land being allowed to petition against the local improvement. In particular that:

1. Section 408(1) and (2) of the *Municipal Government Act* be amended to add "...water mains and appurtenances." In addition to sewers.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 2008.C.ii.7: Infrastructure Improvements in Future Annexation Areas

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association request the Government of Alberta amend the *Municipal Government Act* to enact legislation to require all infrastructure improvements related to lands identified to be annexed from one Alberta municipality to another to have the approval of both Alberta municipalities before said improvements can be undertaken by a debenture.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 2008.C.iii.3: Debt for Seniors' Housing Authority

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association request that the Government of Alberta amend the *Alberta Capital Finance Authority Act* to add seniors' Housing authorities as shareholders of the Alberta Capital Finance Authority.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 2008.C.iv.2: Provincial Budget

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association encourage the Provincial Government to table the Provincial Budget in the month of February of each year; and if that is impossible, then that the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association request the Government of Alberta to supply municipalities with education requisition funding requirements no later than the end of February each year.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED

RESOLUTION 2008.C.iv.4: Issuance of School Declaration Forms

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association urge the Province of Alberta to amend the *School Act* so that the onus is on the School board to obtain school declarations, thereby freeing up the municipal clerks from this very time consuming, repetitive and costly service.

2008 Convention: Resolution ADOPTED