

Rethinking Municipal Governance for a Changing Alberta: The Future of Local Governance Communications Package

Q & As

Q. Why are weak municipalities an issue?

A. Weak municipalities are in a difficult position because their tax base cannot support necessary services. Moreover, weak municipalities are not in a position that allows them to work effectively with neighbouring municipalities. They often struggle in securing grants and do not have a system of governance that is effective and efficient in helping them face the current and future challenges.

Q. What is a “sustainable” or “viable” municipality?

A. A sustainable or viable municipality is simply a municipality that is able to effectively and efficiently govern itself today and tomorrow.

Q. What is *the Future of Local Governance* initiative?

A. *The Future of Local Governance* is AUMA’s framework for the review and discussion of municipal governance in Alberta. In 2009, the AUMA Board of Directors established a Task Force on the Future of Local Governance (FOLG) to assist AUMA in developing a Policy Paper on the topic of the future of local governance in Alberta.

The FOLG initiative has involved several Task Force papers, a President’s Summit, and a Convention Policy Paper currently in draft format.

Q. Why is *the Future of Local Governance* important?

A. Municipal government in Alberta is at the crossroads and when it comes to local government AUMA has a long history of leading change. Recently provincial officials have stated publicly that there are too many municipalities in Alberta. This creates uncertainty for municipal elected officials, for municipal administrators and for community members.

Q. What is the goal?

A. The ultimate goal is to ensure that Alberta’s municipalities have a governance model that will allow them to be effective and efficient, one which will allow municipalities to serve the needs of its citizens both now and in the future.

Q. What is the process?

A. In moving toward a Policy Paper, the Task Force on the Future of Local Governance:

- First reviewed the current state of local governance (legislative, program, policy, financial and restructuring), and current issues affecting local governance
- Then reviewed examples outside of Alberta where local governance has been restructured and why it worked or did not work
- Developed clear options related to effective local governance, including an assessment of the effectiveness of the proposed options for change. It has also considered the risks and benefits of proposed options and the incentives required to make changes.

The Task Force developed a Draft Policy Paper that was available for member and stakeholder feedback. The Final Policy Paper will be released in September and presented at Convention 2009 in November.

Q. What has been done to date that is available to review?

- *Background Research Paper*
- *Online Survey*
- *President's Summit Discussion Paper*
- *President's Summit*
- *President's Summit Proceedings document*
- *Draft Policy Paper*

Q. Where can I see this information?

There is a FOLG page on the AUMA website

http://www.auma.ca/live/AUMA/Toolkits+%26+Initiatives/Future_of_Local_Governance

Q. What happens next?

During AUMA's annual convention in November 2009, members will vote on the Final Policy Paper.

While AUMA leads the broader discussion of improving municipal government through the Future of Local Governance, it is also working on several initiatives that aim at strengthening municipalities and their connections to other orders of government—in other words, AUMA strives to “walk the talk.”

- **Municipal Sustainability Planning (MSP)** Initiative has or is assisting more than 20 communities in long-term planning. It is a process for municipalities to look long-term at the communities they want and take proactive steps to move there, beginning with the identification of priority spending areas.
 - The ***Ahead.Together.*** Initiative has resulted in Formal Provincial Municipal Agreement in draft form that serves as a framework for more certainty, better efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and greater accountability in future municipal planning. At the same time, if signed, such an agreement would streamline and simplify multiple, complex government programs and processes, reducing inefficiencies and maximizing resources.
 - **Regular Membership Redefinition** – The question of opening regular membership to all municipalities will be put to the membership at the upcoming Convention. If passed it will give every municipality in the province the option of joining the Association as full members – and a seat at the “solutions table.”
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