

Small Communities Newsletter

Contact

Please feel free to contact us with questions or comments about the newsletter or the Small Communities Committee.

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Small Communities Standing Committee

The Small Communities Committee is a unified voice, advocate and resource, focusing on urban municipal governments with populations of 2,500 or less. The Committee is comprised of seven members from communities of 2500 or less, including two AUMA Board members.

The Committee is accountable to the Board for: sharing services - regional and AMSC aggregated; reviewing and recommending suggestions for under 2500 Mayor's Caucuses; reviewing the status of MSP (Municipal Sustainability Project) that is impacting Small Communities; and defining the process, developing a Work Plan and updating the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

President's Summit on Energy Well Attended by Small Communities

The President's Summit on Energy attracted the interest of a number of elected officials and administrators from small communities across the province. "Small communities have lots of questions about the future of the oil and gas industry. At the same time, we can't forget the past. The Summit allowed us to discuss issues like reclamation, flaring and abandoned pipelines." says Heather Thompson, Legislative Services, Turner Valley.

Concentrated work sessions at the President's Summit on Energy broke important ground in the complex task of creating an AUMA Energy Policy Framework.

The Framework will foster a comprehensive, collaborative and integrated approach in:

- Proactively resolving municipal challenges and opportunities arising from the energy sector.
- Responding effectively to provincial and federal legislation, policy and initiatives related to energy.

Popular with delegates were the tours of the Oil Sands at the Shell, Suncor and Syncrude sites and a tour of the municipality which highlighted the physical

and social infrastructure pressures associated with a boom and bust economy. Through the tours and workshops, participants had the opportunity to:

- Understand how the energy sector impacts communities and municipal governments
- Provide input on the necessary foundations for a municipal energy policy.
- Identify policy matters that are of primary interest and concern.

A summary of the Summit results will be shared at the June Mayors' Caucuses.

The Infrastructure and Energy Committee will continue to advance the work on the Policy Framework and expects to provide the energy principles and priority policy issues for further discussion at the 2011 Convention.

A Small Communities Focus on Welcoming and Inclusive Communities

The Welcoming and Inclusive Communities project is a partnership between the AUMA and the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission and the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship branch of Alberta Culture and Community Spirit. The objectives of the project are:

- To build the capacity of municipalities to become more welcoming and inclusive and to combat racism and discrimination in their communities
- To build and support a network of Alberta municipalities actively engaged in welcoming and inclusive initiatives
- To facilitate the sharing of information and resources amongst Alberta municipalities
- Expand and develop tools and educational resources

A component of this project is to develop tools and resources specifically focused on the needs of small communities. An intern student, Amy Wilhelm, will be creating a Small Communities Engagement Strategy to focus specifically on the unique, local realities of small communities. For more information about how your community can be involved in this project, [contact us](#).

**AUMA
 PRESIDENT'S
 SUMMIT ON
 ENERGY
 May 10-12, 2011
 Fort McMurray, AB**

Message from the Chair

In talking to elected officials and administrators that work for Alberta's small communities, I am often told about the glaring infrastructure deficit that exists.

What type of infrastructure does your small community need most? Water system upgrades? Improvements to streets and roads? Recreation facilities?

Municipal infrastructure is core work to municipalities, and small communities can be particularly vulnerable to decreasing tax bases and thereby decreasing funds for infrastructure. And yet, well-maintained municipal infrastructure is key to viable and sustainable small communities. Your Small Communities Committee at AUMA has discussed viability and infrastructure, and has chosen the topic as the 2011 Small

Communities Convention Session. You won't want to miss hearing about how municipal viability and municipal infrastructure go hand in hand.

The Small Communities Committee will also address other issues such as the Municipal Sustainability Strategy, emergency services, planning and business vitality. As always, we welcome your input, and encourage you to participate in the Mayors' Caucus meetings, and to get in touch with Committee members if you have emerging issues that you would like us to address.

Kindest Regards,
Anita Gillard, Committee Chair
Mayor, Village of Clive



A Primer on the Collaborative Governance Initiative

What is collaborative governance?

Collaborative governance is a cooperative approach to addressing an increasingly complex array of issues facing local government and its citizens.

What should collaborative governance lead to?

- Establishing effective partnerships between and within municipalities
- Helping citizens learn more about local issues and decision making process, creating transparency and enhancing communication
- Finding out what citizens think about issues and policy decisions
- Defusing tensions between different organizations and groups of people
- Collaborative inter/intra municipal cultures and leaders

What is the Government of Alberta's Collaborative Governance Initiative?

The Collaborative Governance Initiative (CGI) can be undertaken internally or intermunicipally as a preventative approach to dispute resolution. It helps municipalities develop collaborative protocols and processes to avert conflict escalations and to allow

municipalities to rely on an agreed-upon process for collaborative engagement.

What is the history of the Collaborative Governance Initiative?

In 2008, Alberta Municipal Affairs' Municipal Dispute Resolution program and specifically the Local Dispute Resolution Initiative was renamed and its scope broadened. This broadened scope, developed in concert with representatives from AUMA, AAMDC, LGAA and AARMA, reflects the changing realities municipalities face.

In addition to working with municipalities to improve their internal conflict management capacity, it also provided support in the development of intermunicipal cooperation protocols. These protocols provide a framework for a number of municipalities to address intermunicipal issues as they may emerge. They are proactive in nature and provide specific details on how municipalities will interact with each other.

What does the Collaborative Governance Initiative offer municipalities?

Municipal Affairs can provide grant funding for a CGI in two components:

- Assessment Phase – a grant up to \$50,000

- o With external assistance, municipalities can review and evaluate how particular issues are being managed
- o Develop improved ways to manage these issues; through cooperative policies and procedures
- o Implementation Phase – a matching grant up to \$30,000
- o Development of implementation plans; including training and ways to evaluate what is being implemented

Municipal Affairs can also be part of steering committee overseeing the project and to provide assistance with developing the Request for Proposals and selection of a consultant.

Why is the Collaborative Governance Initiative important?

Since inception of the initiative, the number of CGIs has grown each year. They have addressed matters from cooperation protocols to planning and development; service agreements to infrastructure agreements; and community engagement to



dispute resolution.

With the topics of municipal sustainability and viability becoming more and more prevalent, councils are investigating more ways to be such. One proactive measure is to form better relationships, become more cooperative and form partnerships with neighbours to improve operations. Another measure is to ensure the organization is working as smoothly and as efficiently as possibly internally.

It is these types of proactive initiatives that municipalities are becoming more involved in and are strong reasons why the CGI program is becoming more popular with municipalities.

To find out more, visit [Alberta Municipal Affairs](#).

Alberta's Community Spirit Program Can Add Horsepower to Charitable Donations that Benefit Small Communities

The [Community Spirit Program](#)'s goal is to increase individual charitable giving to help support Alberta's nonprofit and charitable organizations. The program is donor-driven, meaning it recognizes and encourages Albertans to make cash donations. Monies received from Albertans stay in Alberta. The program is made up of two components – the charitable tax credit and the donation grant.

Charitable Tax Credit

Effective January 2007, the Alberta tax credit for eligible charitable donations that exceed \$200 in a tax year has increased from 12.75 per cent to 21 per cent of the amount donated. When added to the federal tax credit of 29 per cent, this gives Albertans a 50 per cent non-refundable tax credit on those donations – one of the highest charitable tax credits in Canada.

Donation Grant

The [Community Spirit Program](#) donation grant recently completed its third year, and provided over \$14.9 million in funding to over 1,790 nonprofit and charitable organizations. A complete list of [this year's recipients](#) is

available on the [Alberta Culture and Community Spirit](#) website. This brings the total, over the three years this program has been in place, to 5,031 applicants sharing in a total of \$52.9 million.

The donation grant is available to registered nonprofit and charitable organizations that demonstrate they have received a minimum total of \$1,000 in eligible cash donations from individual Albertans over a completed 12-month fiscal period. The maximum grant available is \$25,000 per year, up to a maximum of \$50,000 over three years.

How the Community Spirit Program Helps Local Communities

The grant can be used to support an organization's operations, programs, and/or capital projects within the province. For example, the Trochu and District Hall Development Society plans on using Community Spirit Program funding to support operations and capital improvement projects for its community hall, which serves community groups and individual functions in Trochu and surrounding areas.

The Hines Creek and District Figure Skating Club provides programs and instruction to children and youth. The club plans on using Community Spirit Program funding to support ice rental fees, which will allow the club to maintain affordable fees for families.

The Granum Drop-In Center acts as a hub for the town, as it hosts various activities, programs, and events. The group will use Community Spirit Program funding to purchase a sound system and projector for the hall.

Application Process

The application process opens in early September with an annual application deadline of December 31. Information sessions are held throughout the province from mid-September to mid-November providing an opportunity for applicants to better understand the program, including a review of program guidelines and how to apply.

If you have any questions, visit the [Community Spirit Program](#) website or contact Pam Boutilier, Program Director, at 780-644-8207 (toll-free by first dialing 310-0000).

New Internship Program Announced

Alberta's new Serving Communities Internship Program (SCiP) will award Alberta post-secondary students a \$1,000 bursary for completing an internship with one of the province's non-profit/voluntary organizations.

The program will be run in collaboration with Volunteer Alberta, benefiting from their extensive reach into Alberta's nonprofit/voluntary sector.

Volunteer Alberta will work with organizations across the province to create a wide variety of meaningful internship experiences with two goals in mind:

- To allow students to gain practical experience in their fields
- To help non-profit/voluntary sector organizations access a new pool of talented and skilled individuals

The Serving Communities Internship Program will be open to post-secondary students enrolled in any certificate, diploma, undergraduate, graduate or PhD program at one of Alberta's 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions. The program will welcome traditional internships and virtual internships, allowing students to offer their skills from anywhere in the province.

Volunteer Alberta is already working with community organizations to identify potential internship opportunities. The program will be open for student applications in the fall.

In the first year of its three-year pilot, the program will award up to 500 bursaries. This number could grow up to 1000 bursaries in year three.

[For more information, click here.](#)

Interview with Solicitor General and Public Security on RCMP Contract and Police Services

AUMA staff had the opportunity to meet with senior staff from Solicitor General and Public Security and received the following answers to our questions relating to the future direction of RCMP and police services in Alberta.

1. Why did Alberta decide to negotiate its own contract for RCMP services?

Renegotiation of the Provincial Police Service Agreement (PPSA) with all provinces and territories has been ongoing since 2007 to attempt to gain provincial/territorial and then

federal, provincial and territorial consensus on the various articles of the agreement. AUMA representatives attended meetings throughout the process as the Alberta municipalities' representative.

At the end of the day, however, each province must sign its own contract with the federal government. We felt that we had reached agreement with them on all major issues and that the time was right to finalize our part of the contract and move the process forward. A key element of our agreement is that Alberta will

be able to draw benefit from any further gains made by the other provinces and territories as they finalize the terms of their agreements, and hence their municipal policing agreements, which will mirror the PPSA.

Generally, federal, provincial and territorial consensus has been reached on matters relating to enhanced governance and accountability, such as modernized public complaints processes, independent investigations for serious incidents involving

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Volunteer Fire Departments: Recruitment & Retention

Volunteers are what keep many communities thriving these days. Volunteer firefighters in particular, play an important role in small communities, and it is important to recognize and support them in our communities.

In 2010, the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) commissioned Volunteer Alberta to carry out a study on recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

The Final Report includes Strategies and Tools that communities can use to enhance their volunteer firefighter services. Some local initiatives that are suggested in the Toolkit are:

- Involve current volunteer firefighters in planning formal recruitment drives.
- Raise local awareness of the value of local firefighters through traditional and new media activities.
- Engage in regular and ongoing outreach with local employers to recruit new volunteer firefighters.
- Engage community groups on a regular and ongoing basis to recruit new volunteer firefighters.
- Develop a spousal support network.
- Establish child care services.
- Establish diversity policies in the fire department.
- Create firefighter service recognition awards.

The Toolkit contains fully developed strategies and tools that you can use in your community to help keep your volunteer firefighters on the job!

For more information, please review the entire Report on the [AFCA website](#).



Black Diamond: Rebuilding Their Infrastructure One Step at a Time

The Town of Black Diamond is aware that water is not only a resource, it is a life source. Town Council and Administration together share the responsibility to ensure a healthy, secure and sustainable water supply for the community.

During the early months of 2008, the Town's Public Works Manager performed an extensive potable water audit on the Town's distribution and collection systems. This water audit revealed that the Town's distribution versus collection was at 38%. This meant for every 100 cubic meters of treated water distributed, the Town was only collecting revenues through billing of 38 cubic meters. Where was the water going?

Further investigations revealed the Town had two contributing problems. Meter errors in water distribution and 650 of 900 residential homes had water collection meters that were older than 20 years. These problems were brought to the attention of Town Council; with recommendations to correct these meter deficiencies.

Council agreed to rectify the water meter deficiencies and directed the Town's Public Works Manager to put the meter replacement capital project into play. Various funding options were available with the likelihood of an increased user rate to the Town's residential and commercial water users.

A number of programs began in 2008 that assisted the Town of Black Diamond with a successful outcome with regards to potable water efficiency:

- A mandatory outdoor water conservation policy was adopted to reduce water consumptions.
- An aggressive leak detection program was initiated.
- Potable water education programs were communicated to the public.
- Federal and Provincial Infrastructure Stimulus Funding, part of
- Canada's Economic Action Plan, was specified. Infrastructure projects that were ready to be

commissioned were approved for funding.

The Town of Black Diamond applied to this program and was successful in grant funding. This meant that the cost of replacing the water meters within the Town of Black Diamond would be shared with the Provincial and Federal governments. Because of the assisted funding that came available through (ISF), only a slight increase to water rates was levied to the Town's water users.

Today the Town of Black Diamond has installed all 650 residential water meters and is on track to have 86% of the distributed water collected through billing in 2011, and an anticipated collection to be approximately 90% plus in 2012. Present residential water usage is 386 liters / person / day with future targets of 323 liters / person / day being achieved.

For more information, please contact: *Andy Pfeifer, Public Works Manager, Town Of Black Diamond*, 403.933.4348 or by [e-mail](#).

Are You Tuned In?

Events Calendar

The AUMA and other organizations host a number of conferences and events throughout the year that are of interest to small communities. To find out about events that are key to your community, [click here to visit the AUMA web site calendar](#).

Weekly Digest

Each week the AUMA and AMSC release a Digest that covers information on advocacy efforts, AMSC services and other topics of interest to municipal politicians and administrators. Make sure that you are in the know by subscribing via the AUMA web site. [Click here to subscribe](#).



Does your municipality have a water efficient bylaw or a rebate program?

Do you need more support to implement AUMA's Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity (Water) Plan? Let us know. [Click here to take the Water CEP Targets Survey today!](#)

Interview with Solicitor General and Public Security on RCMP Contract and Police Services continued

police, and harmonized policing standards. Regional variances among provinces and territories over costing principles, however, have precluded a timelier collective renegotiation of the PPSA. Cost issues that remain outstanding include RCMP accommodations, recruiting and cadet training, and the total compensation costs for contracted RCMP services.

2. What service changes can municipalities expect as a result of the new contract?

There will be no service changes — services will be consistent with municipal contracts, as before. We do expect better accountability, better oversight, better local engagement and clearer financial planning — but no actual changes in service.

Significant advancement has been made with respect to modernizing the relationship between all parties through the collective development of a preamble to the contract. Discussions have stressed the need for the RCMP to be responsive to provincial, territorial and municipal policing priorities.

The Province has moved to strengthen the RCMP's role as a municipal policing agency.

Key elements of the new agreement:

- The new agreement expires March 31, 2032.
- Alberta will pay the federal government 70 per cent of the cost of providing and maintaining the Provincial Police Service in accordance with the agreement.
- Municipalities with a

population between 5,000 and 15,000 will pay Canada 70 per cent

- Municipalities with a population over 15,000 will pay Canada 90 per cent of the cost of providing and maintaining the Municipal Police Service in accordance with the agreement.
- The new agreement also emphasizes local engagement in setting the objectives, priorities and goals of the Provincial Police Service and the Municipal Police Service.
- While the internal management of the Provincial Police Service (including its administration and the determination and application of professional police standards and procedures) will remain under the control of Canada, the agreement now acknowledges the need to harmonize professional police standards and procedures and says the RCMP will meet or exceed provincial standards. These standards will apply to the Municipal Police Service as well. In the previous agreement the setting of standards as they applied to the RCMP was the sole authority of the RCMP.
- Under the new agreement, an added emphasis has been placed on information sharing, planning, reporting and meaningful consultation and decision making. New planning provisions mirror what is currently undertaken by Alberta in its business and capital planning processes.

- New to the agreement is the addition of dispute resolution processes focused on timely and conciliatory resolution.
- Investments made by Alberta into the RCMP accommodation program will now stay in Alberta, as opposed to being pooled nationally.

3. What are the cost implications and how will they be addressed?

- New costs associated with the renegotiation of the PPSA are currently estimated at 3 per cent over the 1992 contract. The increase takes effect April 1, 2012.
- Municipal Policing Agreement cost increases are estimated at less than 2 per cent over the 1992 contract. This increase also takes effect April 1, 2012.

4. What will the process and timing be for resolving a related issue on who pays for policing – i.e., many municipalities don't currently pay?

The concept of equitable payment for policing is being advanced through Alberta's new Law Enforcement Framework, which was announced in December. Strategic Direction 9 of the Framework addresses the need to share policing costs in a way that is flexible, predictable, sustainable, and equitable.

Our ministry will continue to work on developing a costing model. Discussions have been held with the AUMA and the

AAMDC about the concept. More work needs to be done on this and there are plans for additional consultation with municipal associations about what a fair and equitable distribution of police costs would look like.

5. Can you tell us more about the law enforcement training centre in Fort Macleod?

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Centre in Fort Macleod also supports the new Law Enforcement Framework and will play a critical role in ensuring consistent, accessible and quality state-of-the-art recruit training as well as specialized training and ongoing professional development for all police and peace officers in Alberta. RCMP basic cadet training will remain at Depot in Regina.

The Alberta government's capital plan budget includes \$122.4 million for the project through Alberta Infrastructure.

Construction of the centre will begin by summer of 2012.

Ministry and RCMP representatives will be attending the CAO component of the June Mayor's Caucus meetings to provide further details and respond to members' questions about these future directions. So if you haven't already registered to attend this important presentation, please do so as soon as possible.

Small Communities Committee



Back Row (L-R): Lynn Horbasenko, Village of Bawlf; Mayor Jenelle Saskiw, Village of Marwayne; Mayor Anita Gillard, Village of Clive; Mayor Bard Sjoquist, Village of Edgerton.

Front Row (L-R): Councillor Mark Watson, Town of Smoky Lake; Councillor Dell Wickstrom, Village of Alliance

Engaging Small Communities in the Local Matters Initiative

AUMA recently launched a campaign calling on the Province to work with urban municipalities to develop a new relationship and funding model. Under the current relationship between the municipal and provincial orders of government, municipalities can't cover the costs of basic services out of their own property tax revenues. Instead municipalities rely heavily on a complex, outmoded ad hoc grant system that does not provide stable funding for planning purposes, is not transparent to taxpayers and creates administrative inefficiencies for both provincial and municipal governments.

AUMA appreciates MSI funding but the program does not address the fact that municipal responsibilities and needs have evolved over time. Further, the program has a defined end date and municipal governments need

to think about supporting their infrastructure in the future. It is time for a new relationship between governments. It's time to recognize municipalities require autonomy and resources to fulfill their responsibilities and obligations to provide core services. It's time for a new Provincial/Municipal Relationship built on respect and accountability. For these reasons, AUMA is asking the Government of Alberta to:

1. Rewrite the Municipal Government Act to ensure municipal core accountabilities align and are reflective of the ability to plan, deliver and pay for local community services.
2. That the province and AUMA build a good governance framework where responsibilities are clear—with matching sustainable and formal tax and revenue authorities for core services.

The new framework would

replace the current system of ad hoc municipal grants with direct access to revenue and tax sources; however, grants would still be required in various situations such as assistance to municipalities that do not have the tax capacity to meet their core responsibilities. This is critical to small municipalities who receive more grants from the Province than the amount of property tax sent to the Province through the Education requisition. It is an essential part of the Local Matters platform that there is a base grant to support smaller communities. Other areas where grants are critical are shared responsibilities between the province and municipalities (e.g. policing for safe communities); regional cooperation incentives and opportunities; major infrastructure costs such as integrated, multi-modal transportation systems; and Provincial programs and incentives.

In order for the Local Matters campaign to be successful, AUMA members must take these key messages to their MLAs and MPs. Elected officials in small communities have a tremendous advantage because they tend to have closer connections and greater opportunity for conversation with their MLAs and MPs. To help facilitate this conversation, AUMA has developed a Toolkit which gives members the resources to promote the Local Matters message in their own communities. AUMA believes that the success of the Local Matters campaign lies in the success of its penetration in local communities.

We urge you to use the tools and communicate your experiences with us.

To do so, and for downloads and more information, see the [Local Matters page on the AUMA web site](#).