

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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 Lynn Horbasenko, Village of Bawlf
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Small Communities 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 eight 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 Mayors' 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.

Small Town Saturday Night



For nineteen years, Big Valley Jamboree has enjoyed the support of hundreds of thousands of loyal fans from across North America. A major part of that support comes from rural communities throughout Alberta. As a "thank-you" for this ongoing support, [Travel Alberta](#) and [The Big Valley Jamboree](#) have decided to award one of these communities with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to put their small town on the map.

In 2012, there will be a mini Big Valley Jamboree in one lucky rural Alberta community. All the excitement of the festival, including some of Canada's finest country music entertainers could be coming to YOUR small town! It is called "Small Town Saturday Night." To find out how to enter your community, [click here](#).

Update on Rural Broadband

Broadband access is a necessary element for the economic and social prosperity of our communities. It connects people to information and services, reduces business costs and opens up new markets. AUMA's Small Communities Committee has been monitoring this issue, given that some of our smaller members (i.e. 7 summer villages) do not currently have any broadband access while other members are dissatisfied with their current access in terms of speed and reliability.

Two news releases were issued in January 2012 pertaining to broadband coverage:

[Final Mile Rural Connectivity Initiative Partners the Province with Municipalities and Industry](#)

On January 16, the Government of Alberta announced the Final Mile Rural Connectivity Initiative and outlined its intention to work with municipalities and industry to provide access to high-speed Internet in unserved areas of rural Alberta. The initiative will help close existing service gaps and ensure reliable, high-speed Internet is available to at least 98 per cent of Albertans. About six per cent or 72,000 households in rural Alberta are currently without access to high-speed Internet service.

Included in the initiative is the \$5 million Final Mile Rural Community Program, inviting local governments who plan to provide high-speed Internet in their communities to apply for provincial funding to support or expedite their plans. More information can be found at www.rural.alberta.ca. Applicants are required to complete and submit a program application form on or before March 31, 2012.

[AAMDC Releases Report Mapping Broadband Coverage in Rural Alberta](#)

AAMDC released a report on January 16 outlining the state of broadband coverage in rural Alberta. AUMA participated in the steering committee for the Broadband Coverage report through an invitation from AAMDC.

The report demonstrates that while there have been improvements in recent years to ensure all Albertans have access to the internet, there is still a gap between the internet service that rural areas can expect, compared to their urban counterparts. The report focuses on quantifying what areas do and do not have access to broadband. Read the full report [here](#).

For more information, please contact [Zohreh Saher](#), Research Analyst, 780.989.7407.

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the winter 2012 edition of our Small Communities Newsletter.

The Small Communities Committee is committed to tackling issues that are pertinent to the under 2500 population. Our 2012 Committee is off to a great start given the leadership and enthusiasm of our members! Thank you to the returning committee members and welcome to Krista Olson from Hythe and Cliff Ayrey from Longview. Cliff also sits on the AUMA Board as a Director of Villages South.

The Committee will be responding to a number of challenges and opportunities this year, including providing feedback on the review of property assessment and tax policy and the development of municipal energy and water policies. As well, the Committee will engage on a number of issues including emergency response, municipal sustainability planning, rural

economic development and capacity building for small communities. As well, the Committee will provide suggestions for the bi-annual Mayor's Caucus meetings.

I encourage you to contact us with your thoughts as to how we can best address your concerns. Please email [Zohreh Saheer](mailto:Zohreh.Saheer@AUMA.ca), Research Analyst, AUMA, 780.989.7407.

I am looking forward to a great year and hope to see you at the February Mayors' Caucus!

Have a wonderful season!

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



Communities small and large talked immigration & integration at Come Together Alberta

On December 1 & 2, 2011, representatives from over 20 municipalities gathered in Edmonton to discuss how to create communities that foster the wellbeing of newcomers and the communities they settle in. Hosted by AUMA's Welcoming and Inclusive Communities (WIC) Initiative, Come Together Alberta: Building Welcoming and Inclusive Communities brought together municipal officials and staff, community organizations and government representatives to share experiences and take home leading edge knowledge about working with newcomers. Attendees were introduced to new frameworks for thinking about inclusion, innovative ideas for community projects and municipal policy and a number of resource materials they can draw on to support their work. In the words of one conference participant: "I was stretched!"

Smaller communities were particularly interested in:

- HRSDC had a workshop and profiled the Finding Talent video series. [The videos are available here.](#) Other resources are available on the site and can be passed

on to local employers looking to create a more inclusive work environment.

- For small municipalities who work closely with on-or off-reserve Aboriginal communities, Relationship-Building with Aboriginal and Newcomer Communities showed how making connections between various communities can contribute to stronger overall relationships and can be a vehicle for intercultural understanding and collaboration. Hearing about the [Vancouver Dialogues Project](#) was inspirational to many as an example.
- The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFW) in Alberta was a highlight for many attendees, and covered both the GOA's strategy regarding TFWs as well as some critiques of the entire federally-run TFW program. Mayor Martin Shields also talked about the experience of Brooks in providing services and building relationships with newcomers.
- The formal launch of WIC's Diversity & Inclusion

Campaign was also a highlight. Based on input and consultation with a number of Alberta municipalities, the campaign offers municipalities a way to increase awareness about the value of diversity and promote any diversity initiatives you might be doing.

- For municipalities who are interested in or have just joined the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CCMARD), the presentation on the newly launched CCMARD Toolkit provides practical tools and information to use at all stages of CCMARD membership. The toolkit also includes a wealth of case studies and best practices.

AUMA was also delighted to launch our [newly redesigned WIC micro site](#) at the event. The micro site contains a comprehensive set of online resources for municipalities doing diversity and inclusion work in a number of different areas – including one section devoted specifically to how



small communities can effectively work with newcomers. Also check out the accompanying set of short videos profiling municipal best practices around immigration in four Alberta communities.

For those that couldn't attend, be sure to check the WIC micro site in the coming months. We'll be posting videos of the sessions, speaker PowerPoints, and a full conference report.

For more information, please contact [Aliya Jamal](#), Immigration Program Assistant, Welcoming and Inclusive Communities, AUMA, 780.989.7436. Aliya is available until March 31 to meet with your Council and/or municipal administration to discuss the toolkits available or small communities.

Small Communities Set to Meet at AUMA's Mayors' Caucus and MLA Breakfast

The Mayors' Caucuses have been a tremendous opportunity for municipally elected officials and administrators to network and build consensus on key issues that affect Alberta's communities. These meetings are held over three days according to community population size: under 2500, between 2500 and 10000 and over 10000. This format helps to promote discussion among similar sized municipalities because, as AUMA well understands, communities often require tailor-made solutions to various municipal challenges.

Each Mayors' Caucus meeting will include a stand-alone CAO session and an opportunity for a round table discussion where members can raise issues of particular concern to their community. The agenda for this February's meetings will include a diverse range of critical municipal issues such as water allocation and water/waste water infrastructure, municipal roles and responsibilities, and property tax assessment. Further, AUMA will provide an update on various initiatives including Local Matters, medical first responders/ambulance transition, and more.

The Small Communities Caucus takes place on Wednesday February 15 and begins at 9:00 am. The event will be held at the [Matrix Hotel in Edmonton](#). The MLA Breakfast will be held the following day, Thursday February 16, and is also at the Matrix Hotel. The MLA Breakfast brings together Ministers, Members of the Legislative Assembly and Municipal Officials for an open and frank discussion of key political priorities, challenges, and opportunities.

Indeed, with a new Premier and Cabinet in place and the next provincial budget on the

horizon, it is more important than ever for municipalities to work together to articulate a clear municipal agenda. You won't want to miss this event!

Registration for both the Caucus and MLA Breakfast is free. You can [click here to register](#).

If you would like to submit a Request for Decision (RFD) for this Mayors Caucus, please fill in the template ([click here](#) for the RFD template) and return to [Rose Dacyk](#) by February 6, 2012. If you have any questions about these events, you can contact [Sandy Bugeja](#) at 780-989-7418.

Marwayne leads small communities to a sustainable water future

Congratulations to the Village of Marwayne as the first small community in Alberta to meet the goal of AUMA's [Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity \(CEP\) Plan](#) to have members develop CEP plans of their own. Marwayne adopted its Plan on November 14, 2011, a little less than a year after Council passed a motion to start development of a plan adapted from the model motion included in AUMA's [Water CEP Planning Guide](#).

Marwayne has explicitly linked its CEP Plan with its Sustainability Plan, which includes statements about a "dependable supply of clean, healthy water" and sustainable management of water and wastewater systems in the description of the Village's desired future.

A significant portion of the Plan also draws upon a water system study completed by an engineering firm in 2009, which analyzed Marwayne's water supply and distribution system. Based on the findings of the study, a key focus of the Plan is to reduce leaks in the distribution system. The Village is currently working with the



AUMA and American Water and Wastewater Association (AWWA) to assess how the AWWA's water audit software can be improved to provide small municipalities with reliable performance indicators of the health of their distribution system.

The targets of Marwayne's CEP Plan are to reduce:

- Overall annual per capita consumption by 20% from 2006 levels by 2020 (from 372 litres per capita per day (l/c/d) to 297 l/c/d); and
- Unaccounted for water losses in the distribution system to 10% by 2020 (from 17.3%).

Click [here](#) to read Marwayne's Plan and see what you may be able to adapt towards a more sustainable water future for

Exciting news for small business in smaller communities

The Rural Alberta Business Centre Pilot Program is a new partnership between the Government of Alberta and organizations actively involved with the business community in eight locations throughout Alberta: Camrose, Cold Lake, Fort Macleod, Grande Cache, Hanna, La Crete, Rocky Mountain House and Slave Lake.

Each location will feature an office for one-stop access to timely and relevant information and support services, staffed by a small-business advisor who will assist local entrepreneurs in growing and expanding their businesses.

The rural business centres will provide services to entrepreneurs, small business owners and managers at all stages of the business life cycle from the start-up to expansion to succession planning, including:

- one-on-one business advice
- seminars
- workshops

- access to information about small businesses and business opportunities

Small businesses are an important component in the overall economic and social success of communities throughout Alberta. The pilot program promotes stronger linkages between Government of Alberta programs and businesses in rural communities and supports Alberta's competitive and productive economy.

The \$2 million program is led by Treasury Board and Enterprise, with contributions from Agriculture and Rural Development and Human Services. This includes previously announced funding for the centre in Slave Lake as part of the Lesser Slave Lake Regional Wildfire Recovery Plan.

The centres will begin operations in early 2012. Find out more [here](#).