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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 2,500 or less, including two AUMA Board members. The AUMA Board has given the Small Communities Committee a 2016 mandate to:

- Advocate for resolutions affecting small communities.
- Oversee the development of the Small Communities' newsletter.
- Provide input on key legislative and policy changes pertaining to the MGA review.
- Provide feedback on other key policy development such as municipal water and energy policies, long term infrastructure plan, etc.

Small Communities NEWSLETTER

Update on MGA Review

Winter 2016

AUMA's top priority over the past few years has been to identify, advocate and negotiate for required changes to the MGA. This work has involved comprehensive consultation with our members to ensure that we are effectively representing your diverse needs.

The first set of MGA amendments was approved last year through Bill 20, including changes reflecting key suggestions that AUMA had made such as enabling voluntary amalgamations, improving the annexation process, and requiring Councils to establish a code of conduct. While these changes are a good start, the majority of amendments have yet to be released.

Last year, AUMA took a number of actions to ensure that the

needs of municipalities are reflected in these upcoming changes, including:

- building consensus with AAMDC on 30 joint recommendations that were submitted to Municipal Affairs in September as a united front of all Alberta Municipalities;
- advocating key changes to additional topics including amalgamations, annexations and council codes of conduct; and
- communicating our primary goals for future amendments including an improved provincial-municipal relationship, adequate municipal revenue and modernized legislation to reflect the growing

importance of regionalization.

The timeline for the MGA review includes tabling of MGA amendments with the legislature during the spring 2016 session. Following the introduction of these amendments, the Minister will be holding a consultation process with municipalities and stakeholders on the changes over the summer. The legislation will then be re-introduced and passed in fall 2016. Regulations will be developed this year and into 2017. Municipal Affairs has committed to having all regulations introduced prior to the Fall 2017 municipal elections.

In order to gather future input, AUMA will be distributing surveys to our members regarding questions about various regulations. Stay tuned to upcoming newsletters!

Rural Alberta Innovation Learning Commons

The Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities (ACSRC) and Battle River Alliance for Economic Development (BRAED) joined forces in October 2015 to host the Rural Alberta Innovation Learning Commons (RAIL), a three-day learning event focused on rural economic

and community development.

Municipal elected officials and administrators, community development professionals and students from across the province gathered to engage in various rurally focused topics such as: community and economic

development, sustainability planning, social policy, water, continuing care, recruitment and retention, business succession, aboriginal relations and the changing agricultural landscape.

[Access presentations.](#)



Message from the Chair

Hello Small Communities! 2016 is turning out to be an interesting and a challenging year for all of us.

As in the past, small communities continue to look within and work harder to make their resources go that much further. As in the past, some will manage by themselves and others will partner up with their neighbours to make it work.

There are many new initiatives being rolled out (e.g. broadband, solar etc.), so finding the best fit for each community will be a challenge. Education and lessons learned from

other municipalities will be key to future successes.

Small communities are facing a number of issues that need attention and our voice continues to need to be heard by the provincial and federal governments. I know that ambulance dispatch needs work and we are all in need of continued funding for our municipalities.

In these tough economic times, small communities are still the best place to live and raise a family; the strength continues to come from within.



Small Communities Chair
Deputy Mayor Cliff Ayrey,
Village of Longview

AUMA advocacy on Broadband

At the 2015 Convention, members adopted a resolution calling on AUMA to dedicate time and resources towards broadband. Broadband accessibility fits within the Small Communities Committee, as the issues have a particular impact on the viability of small communities. The Committee members have recently met with provincial representatives from Service Alberta and Economic Development and Trade to highlight the importance of this issue and learn more about how the province plans to improve broadband.

AUMA Board members also met with the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry regarding the rural economic development action plan. AUMA will further its advocacy work with Service Alberta and Justice and Solicitor General regarding the broadband's impact on the Alberta First Responders' Radio Communications System (AFRRCS).

Given the multifaceted nature of this topic, AUMA sent a letter to Ministry of Service Alberta offering to help plan and conduct a Symposium to bring together

the CRTC, federal, provincial and municipal leaders, service providers, economic development alliances and other interested parties to discuss solutions to the gap in broadband coverage. We would also be willing to conduct a joint survey with AAMDC on municipal needs and concerns.

Stay tuned to future issues of the newsletter for more updates on AUMA's advocacy on broadband.

"Go East!"

AUMA's Mayors Caucus provided an opportunity for our members to express their support for the Energy East Pipeline. Premier Rachel Notley and provincial leaders joined in this public display of support.

AUMA also sent a letter to municipal associations across Canada to take similar supportive action, outlining how the pipeline will enable access to markets in Europe and Asia as

well as supply eastern refineries to reduce Canada's dependence on foreign energy. The letter cited estimates made by the Conference Board of Canada that this project will support over 14,000 jobs annually during a nine-year development and construction stage, and an additional 3,300 each year in the first 20 years of operations. The pipeline will also provide \$10 billion in tax revenues to the provinces.

The pipeline has been a topic of key interest across the country. The Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association have just passed resolutions in support of the pipeline. This was also an item of much discussion at the recent FCM Board of Directors meeting. [Read AUMA's letter](#)

Inter-Municipal Cooperation: ICE

In the early 2000s, the three villages of Irma, Chauvin and Edgerton decided to band together under the name ICE to accomplish mutually beneficial goals. ICE's primary purpose is to facilitate the sharing of resources, best practices and to submit joint grant applications. To a large degree ICE is coordinated by the respective village CAOs with occasional elected official involvement.

There are quantifiable success indicators for the ICE initiative. These include shared public works projects and resources, shared property, bulk purchases and an agreed upon high degree of

satisfaction. ICE's success extends beyond tangible benefits. It is also notable as an example of three small municipalities, largely overshadowed by the largest regional municipality of Wainwright (which lies between Irma and Edgerton, with Chauvin to the extreme east), reaching the decision to collaborate amongst themselves to achieve goals otherwise out of a single village's scope. This collaboration has led to lower costs and combined purchasing power, shared grant applications that meet population and need requirements and overall closer communication between the respective parties.

Another success indicator of ICE is its extremely high degree of replicability: any grouping of small municipalities can band together on certain projects to address mutual interests and needs, and collaborate to achieve common goals. ICE shows that mutual interest and mutual need can drive communication and lead to greater collaboration. This localized approach to regionalization avoids complicated and large-scale agreements and, in the case of ICE, can begin with a simple desire to combine purchasing power and extend into other projects as the needs and ease of collaboration develop.

More About ICE- Irma, Chauvin, Edgerton	
Issues and impetus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early 2000s, the three villages joined together to pool resources and develop best local practices. • The three hoped to optimize their purchasing power for large projects and submit joint grant submissions, with the ultimate goal of saving taxpayers' money.
Challenges overcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic distance and schedule issues restricting opportunities to meet.
Success factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared water operator and shared public works projects. • Information sharing and communication between public works departments. • Shared property, such as a sewer camera. • Bulk water purchase supplies. • High degree of satisfaction with shared costs and communication channels being open.
Replicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ICE initiative is highly replicable: any group of small, like minded and geographically close communities can join together to pursue cost saving measures and promote regional cooperation
Innovations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Success Factors above. The success factors can all be considered innovations.
Critical turning points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified.
Lesson learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective planning and open communication are crucial • Finding ways to capitalize on the respective strengths of the groups' members

Coming soon! New economic development resources

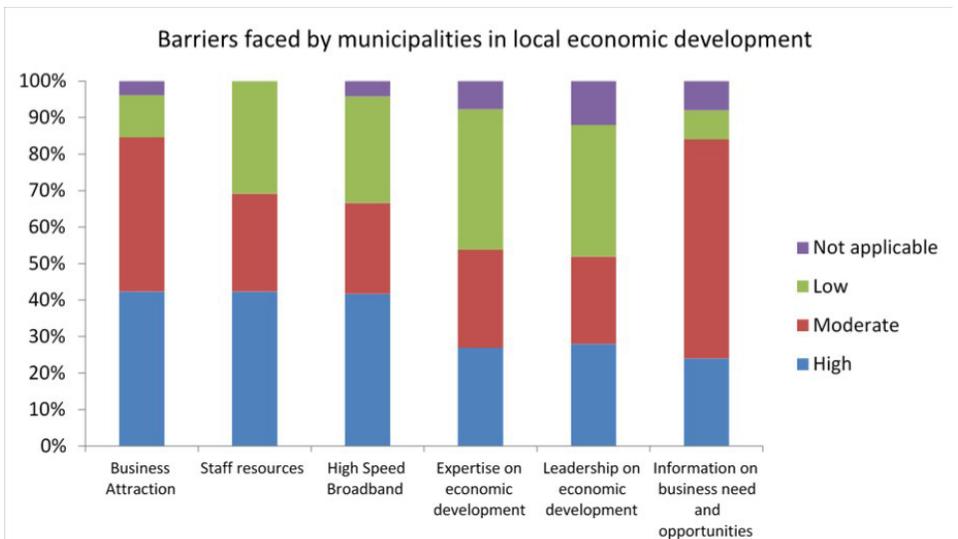
AUMA is currently developing an Economic Development Resources Hub. The push for the Hub is a result of the Fall 2015 survey distributed amongst our members. Forty percent of our small communities identified economic development as their top priority, and along with the Small Communities Committee having likewise considered this a priority, the creation of a resources Hub has become one of AUMA's 2016 strategic initiatives.

The survey highlighted our members' top local economic development activities, where the three most prominent areas were business attraction and investment (91%), entrepreneurial development (65%), and workforce development (52%). Likewise, the surveys also identified the top three barriers: business attraction, staff resources, and access to high speed broadband. The top three actions that municipalities recommended to address these

barriers were workforce solutions, better broadband access in small communities, and education for elected officials.

The needs of our municipalities and their focus on economic development means a comprehensive "one stop shop" for local economic development assistance is a priority for AUMA. The Hub will include access to resources on tourism, business

vitality, attraction strategies and toolkits. It will also provide links and contact points for the province's Regional Economic Development Alliances, Rural Alberta Business Centers, case studies and webinars. These resources will come from various sources including AUMA, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Government of Alberta, Economic Developers Alberta and various other sources.



FCM recognizes Marilyn MacArthur and the Vulcan Business Development Society

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has awarded Marilyn MacArthur an Award of Excellence for her contributions to the [Caribbean Local Economic Development Project \(CARILED\)](#). This was a six year project to develop and test models of Local Economic Development. The award recognizes Marilyn's leadership in leading the CARILED training component in Jamaica, focusing on enhancing institutional capacity to

build local economic development.

Marilyn is the Vulcan Business Development Society's (VBDS) Manager of Business Development. VBDS represents and serves the County and Town of Vulcan and five villages, providing business counselling, business retention and expansion strategies and grant writing services. MacArthur is eager to recognize the enthusiasm and foresight of the VBDS and the

municipalities it represents, who were "overwhelmingly supportive at the thought of myself working on an international level, sharing my expertise of 20 years, and raising the profile of not only our organization, VBDS, but the entire county."

AUMA would like to congratulate Marilyn MacArthur for her involvement in CARILED and for her well-deserved recognition.



Be recognized for economic development success

Nominations are now open for AUMA's 2016 Municipal Sustainability Awards. The 2016 awards focus on successful economic development initiatives in areas such as:

- business attraction and retention;
- support for entrepreneurs;
- workforce development strategies and innovation; and
- tourism and visibility initiatives.

Municipalities that have achieved

economic development goals as part of implementing their sustainability plans are encouraged to apply.

Several awards are available. The Sustainability in Action Award is provided in the following categories:

- Municipalities with populations under 2,500;
- Municipalities with populations of 2,500 to 10,000; and
- Municipalities with populations of 10,000 or more.

The Above and Beyond Award acknowledges staff, residents or organizations who have helped municipalities reach their sustainability goals related to development.

The deadline for nominations is June 15, 2016. Application and nomination forms can be found [here](#).

The Awards will be presented at the AUMA Annual Convention in October.

Free toolkit to help develop transportation options for seniors in small communities

Municipalities can use a new toolkit to help develop transportation options for seniors who do not have access to personal vehicles.

Lack of transportation options makes it difficult for some seniors to attend medical appointments, go shopping, do day-to-day errands or attend social activities. This can compromise their ability to remain healthy and active in their communities. The need for alternate transportation is growing as people are living longer.

The University of Alberta's [Medically At-Risk Driver Centre](#) developed the toolkit with funding assistance from Alberta Seniors and Housing. Along with AAMDC, AUMA provided feedback into the development of the toolkit. The toolkit is designed

to provide urban and rural communities with the resources needed to successfully develop and implement alternate transportation services for seniors.

The toolkit contains information on:

- Getting started;
- Developing and implementing a project plan;
- Conducting a community transportation needs assessment;
- Developing and launching the transportation service;
- Receiving feedback and evaluating the transportation service; and
- Building a sustainable transportation service.

You can download an [electronic copy](#) of the toolkit or request a printed copy by [email](#). AUMA will be holding a webinar on the toolkit on May 18 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. – stay tuned to the Digest for registration information!

AUMA has long advocated that municipalities should have adequate funding for specialized seniors' transportation. In particular we look forward to the Government of Alberta's upcoming consultations on municipal transportation, including the rural bussing strategy. Bus services are essential for connecting seniors and other residents to central or regional service hubs and AUMA will be highlighting the importance of restoring comprehensive bus services to small communities.

AUMA Convention & AMSC Trade Show 2016

Have you booked your hotel rooms yet? Host hotels for this year's AUMA Convention & AMSC Trade Show are filling up fast.

This year's annual event is October 5-7 in Edmonton; ensure it's in your calendar.

[Our Convention website page is now live](#)—visit often for the latest updates, hotel details, and for information on our valued sponsors.



Viability Review

As part of implementing the Municipal Sustainability Strategy (MSS), the MGA was amended in 2013 to replace the dissolution process with a new viability review process (VRP). The purpose of the VRP is to enable municipalities to determine their financial viability and, if required, to develop a plan to lead to viability. Since its implementation, the VRP has also been used for governance matters.

It can be triggered by one or more of the following circumstances:

- inadequate performance on key financial measures;
- citizen petition for a viability review providing the request relates to the municipality's viability; or

- request by the council of an at-risk municipality providing there are clear financial or other viability issues.

AUMA's 2013 resolution called for a number of improvements to the process. As a result of our advocacy, several improvements were made. For example, the ministry announced grants through the Alberta Community Partnerships Program to support municipalities in viability reviews and resulting restructuring (e.g., infrastructure study to support the development of a viability plan). A consistent approach for communicating with the public has also been put in place.

Despite these improvements, the process continues to require some refinement. AUMA therefore submitted

some further suggested changes in early January 2016 including:

- requiring the completion of an infrastructure audit as a mandatory step in the process to ensure that audits are comprehensive, reliable and conducted in a timely manner;
- adopting a more positive tone in public communications to avoid creating confusion and distress for citizens; and,
- adjusting the process for viability reviews that are initiated by a public petition to ensure that there is a mechanism to move forward if citizens wish to dissolve but council does not.

Municipal Climate Change Action Centre receives \$5 million for solar program

In February 2016, the Government of Alberta announced \$5 million for the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre (MCCAC) to provide a solar program for Alberta's municipalities. This investment is earmarked for a solar energy incentive program—the Alberta Municipal Solar Program (AMSP). This program will provide rebates of up to \$0.75 per watt, to a maximum of \$300,000 per project, to municipalities for installing solar on municipal buildings, such as offices, fire halls, community centers and more.

AMSP will help build Alberta's green energy sector, including

creating jobs in the project design and construction sectors, while supporting jobs and growth in the renewable energy supply chain.

How much funding is available?

The program provides a rebate (\$/watt) based on installed solar capacity to a maximum of 20% of capital costs or \$300,000. To receive funding, participants must install solar PV [SB1] and conduct public outreach following completion

of the installation. The rebate will be issued to municipalities after project completion is verified.

Note: Funding is available on a first come, first served basis. Municipalities are eligible to submit multiple applications.

The program is now accepting applications. [Visit MCCAC for information on this and other initiatives.](#)

Solar Capacity	Rebate
<10 kilowatts	\$0.75/Watt
10 kilowatts to <150 kilowatts	\$0.60/Watt
150 kilowatts to 1 Megawatt	\$0.45/Watt



Have your say in public transit and rural bussing

The Government of Alberta is seeking input from municipalities on how to best support public transportation across the province. Our input will be used to inform the development of program criteria for new municipal transit initiatives, rural bus service funding and the development of a new provincial transit strategy. The

province pledged to invest \$8 million per year in 2016-17 and 2017-18 to boost rural bus service to 50 Alberta towns and villages that lost the service three years ago.

Further details on the input process through the online survey can be found on Alberta Transportation's

[website](#). Feedback will be accepted until April 29, 2016. We encourage you to submit your feedback through the survey and to share your views with us at advocacy@auma.ca.

Debrief of Linear Tax Symposiums

This winter, AUMA hosted two Linear Property Tax Symposiums for our members on January 15 in Calgary and January 27 in Nisku. AUMA recently submitted the recommendations that were developed at the Symposiums to the provincial government. This submission can be found [here](#).

AUMA has recommended the following approaches such that effective planning, delivery and governance of infrastructure and services are provided for at an intermunicipal or regional level:

1. Linear tax revenues should be pooled at a regional level and shared with all municipalities within each defined region with the exception of Edmonton and Calgary. All other urban municipalities (i.e., mid-sized cities, towns, villages and summer villages) should be eligible to share in the linear revenue.
2. The revenue-sharing formula should be developed by each region and should use data that is easily accessible and credible.
3. Municipalities should be obligated to enter into revenue and/or cost sharing agreements to equitably share in the cost of infrastructure and services that are located in another municipality, but used by their residents and property owners.
 - Where possible, cost-sharing agreements should be based on the actual cost to provide

a service, and the method to allocate costs should be based on the estimated usage of services or the percentage of rural population that resides around each urban municipality.

- While some province-wide guidelines would be beneficial, municipalities should be enabled to determine arrangements according to their local and regional needs. In the event that municipalities are unable to come to agreement in a timely manner, a process for binding arbitration should be available.
4. Revenue and cost sharing should be a long-term obligation in order to enable and advance intermunicipal and regional service delivery.
 - The degree of sharing should not be dependent on inter-municipal relationships. Rather it should be based on an objective and transparent methodology that encompasses capital and operating costs as appropriate, and should be depend upon the infrastructure and services that are used.
 - There should be a transparent and equitable method of determining funding arrangements which could take the form of revenue

sharing, cost sharing or both.

- Revenue and cost sharing agreements should be long term and outlined in intermunicipal or regional service plans. The funding arrangements should not be vulnerable to unexpected termination or unjustified change.
5. Guidelines and templates should be available to efficiently and effectively formulate service plans without an undue administrative burden, while still accommodating customization to reflect local needs. Clear timelines for reaching agreement should be established. There should be an efficient and timely arbitration process so that disputes can be resolved and are not barriers to collaboration on intermunicipal and regional approaches.

It is assumed that the overarching principles for revenue sharing will be set out in the MGA legislation in spring 2016. AUMA intends to hold further discussions with our members later this spring and summer to further explore approaches for linear sharing and cost-sharing within the MGA regulations. This will include alignment with proposed principles for intermunicipal and regional funding arrangements, and we share these results with the province.



2016 spring webinar series—sharing best practices, facilitating collaboration

AUMA is pleased to offer its members free, interactive, web-based workshops on a variety of topics relevant to municipalities in Alberta. You can find out more about these webinars, including information on how to register, in the upcoming events section on our [website](#) and in our weekly Digest. Recordings of our past webinars can be found on YouTube.

Upcoming Webinars

April 6: Municipal Police Service Agreement

April 27: Stemming the Tide of Aquatic Invasive Species

April: The Future of Oil and Gas in Alberta

May 18: Age-Friendly Transportation Toolkit

May 25: Wetlands Why, Who, What, When, How?

May: School Site Joint Use Agreements

May: Emergency Services Dispatch

May: Records Management

June 7: Implementing Gender-Based Analysis Plus

Support for fire detection and security systems for small communities

AUMA has written a letter to the Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs expressing support for the Association of Summer Villages of Alberta (ASVA) internet-based fire and security systems pilot.

It has been difficult for buildings in rural and small communities to have effective fire protection since alarm systems do not work in areas where there is insufficient bandwidth and fire response services may be slow in responding since they are some distance away. Security is also an issue due to a lack of a sufficient

police presence.

ASVA has found a solution whereby an internet connection can be provided through hardware that enables cellular data. With the connection issue resolved, ASVA encouraged summer villages to install internet-based fire and security systems in municipal buildings and, if desired, to lease them to buildings owned by residents so that the entire community is well protected against loss and damage.

The ASVA pilot provides an opportunity to prove the workability

of the systems and the value to homeowners.

If the pilot is successful, the Ontario Cottage Owners Association has said that they would like to work with ASVA to roll out the systems at a reduced fee for homeowners. Also, ASVA has contacted a manufacturing company in Toronto who will offer the systems at a reduced cost to municipalities.

Stay tuned to the newsletter for updates on the pilot!

Stay informed on advocacy efforts

AUMA's advocacy work spans all the municipal infrastructure and services offered in Alberta's communities, including land use, water and wastewater management, transportation and transit, emergency response, housing, crime prevention, economic development, culture and recreation, to mention just a few.

The complexity of these issues

is growing—aging infrastructure, changing demographics, legislative requirements, and increasing public expectations. As we develop solutions to these issues, we keep in mind one size does not fit all given the diversity of our member municipalities.

To keep you informed of our ongoing advocacy, we have created a [member's only](#) area on our

website where you can see our correspondence with provincial and federal governments, the business community and other organizations as well as their responses.

If you haven't already [signed up for an account](#), please visit [AUMA.ca](#) for more information.



Domestic violence—small communities’ challenges

Municipal governments have a role to play in addressing domestic violence since they set policies (e.g., alcohol bylaws) and provide programs and services (e.g., fund first responders and FCSS, and provide programs and education). The province’s Family Violence Hurts Everyone: A Framework to End Family Violence In Alberta (2013) outlined the following roles for municipal and community leaders:

- Improve community connections to reduce social isolation;
- Value and support non-violence;
- Help build respectful and equitable gender relations;
- Take action to address family violence within the community; and
- Inform, influence and lead community change.

The previous provincial government received criticism from groups like the [Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters](#) about a shortage of resources that has not been addressed by various

frameworks and strategies. The NDP government has been actively funding improvement, committing \$15 million dollars in Fall 2015 to develop a broader range of supports for women and children escaping violent homes, including counselling, housing and access to financial assistance for the 2015-16 fiscal year. The province also invested \$15 million to support Family and Community Safety Program grants that focus on prevention by addressing the root causes of violence, particularly for Indigenous people. Additionally, the Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence Amendment Act (Bill 204) was passed by the government in December 2015, and will allow abuse victims to break a lease early without penalty if the home is unsafe.

Women in small communities are just as likely as women in cities to report being the victims of domestic violence. However, there are unique challenges that women in small communities face:

- increased first responder

response times;

- women in small communities lack the resources to deal with the impact of domestic violence on them and their children as many specialized services for family violence are more centrally located i.e., social supports, counselling, shelters etc. As a result rural people must either find the resources to travel for these services or forego them. Women who leave abusive situations are often impoverished and may not be able to afford the time or the money to travel to larger urban centers;
- women in rural areas are also disadvantaged by the lack of subsidized childcare, inadequate employment opportunities and lack of access to affordable housing; and
- while smaller communities are tight knit, there are challenges around anonymity and privacy.

To find out about how your community can help your residents

Alberta Rural Physician Action Plan

AUMA was contacted by the provincial government regarding a review of the Rural Physician Action Plan (RPAP). The province is seeking input from AUMA and AAMDC. This purpose of the review is to identify any possible inefficiencies or redundancies in programs offered. The program currently receives \$10 million annually from the province. Alberta’s two faculties of medicine have indicated in a letter to the province that RPAP’s role in rural medical education is both redundant and potentially jeopardizes their accreditation. Additionally, at the March Mayors’ Caucus, the Minister of Municipal Affairs indicated that AHS staff might be better suited

to offer the services that RPAP provides to rural communities.

Recruiting and retaining qualified health professionals in rural Alberta has been a continuous challenge. This shortage includes doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, and specialists. When hospitals and other health facilities are unable to fully staff their operations, it creates healthcare challenges for local residents. In some cases, this can lead to the closure of health facilities, which has community impacts that are much greater than the loss of the facility itself including challenges attracting residents, businesses and investment. Some municipalities in Alberta, acting

beyond what is considered a municipal service, have resorted to directly providing incentives to attract health professionals to their communities.

As an independent arms-length organization, RPAP’s rural specific mandate ensures that the needs of rural communities are being met and addressed. Our members have expressed their concerns if these services are transitioned to AHS.

[Click here to see our feedback to the province.](#)



Sharpen your community decision-making skills with the Future Game

The Prairie Canada Future Game is a free interactive game that allows participants to address economic and community development challenges in a light-hearted, entertaining manner.

Playing in a small team format, teams make decisions that shape a hypothetical region's 25-year future. It can be played at conferences, strategic planning sessions, retreats and as a general team-building exercise. Groups that will benefit include municipal politicians and officials, community

leaders, economic development staff and organizations, REDAs and community organizations.

While the Future Game is entertaining, it also allows participants to see the long-term consequences of immediate issues. The Future Game will also:

- engage leaders and stimulate discussion and debate about the community's future;
- add extra depth and strength to regional planning efforts;

- hone leadership and decision-making skills; and
- work as a team-building and change-management tool.

The game is the product of a partnership with the Government of Alberta, the Palliser Economic Partnership and the Future IQ Partners. For more information on how to access the free game, contact Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education, by phone at 780-427-6291.

Government seeks input on municipal infrastructure support for small communities

The province is engaging with municipalities and other stakeholders about how to most effectively restore funding to the [Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program \(STIP\)](#). In November 2015, the province announced it was restoring funding to STIP— beginning in April 2017 – to municipalities and other eligible stakeholders. The program has been unfunded for new projects since 2012-2013.

STIP provides financial assistance to smaller and rural municipalities

for developing and maintaining key transportation infrastructure to promote economic growth and improve mobility, through strategic, project-specific investment in capital construction and rehabilitation of important local transportation infrastructure such as local bridges, community airports, and resource roads. The program will be funded with \$100 million over two years and will be available starting next year.

Lisa Holmes, President of AUMA said that, "Investment in transportation

infrastructure is essential to urban municipalities across the province. In particular, community airports, bridges and roads are important transportation links that have been under-resourced and are in need of capital improvements. We are pleased that Alberta Transportation is restoring funding to STIP, and AUMA members look forward to providing input on how to best use STIP funding to benefit our communities".

Stay tuned to the AUMA Digest and newsletter for updates.

The May 2016 Census is coming

Statistics Canada has announced that the next short-form census will take place in May 2016, including the Census of Population Program and the Census of Agriculture (all agricultural operators who intend to sell at least one product in 2016 must participate). Information packages will be sent out starting May 2. Approximately

35,000 people across Canada will be hired to assist in the census collection.

Information collected in the Census is vital to plan, develop and evaluate relevant programs and services, which includes schools, daycare, family services, housing, policing services, fire protection, roads, public

transportation and skills training.

While the new federal government has reinstated the long-form census, the May census will be short-form and voluntary.

For more information on the 2016 Census please visit [StatsCan](#).

