



AAMDC ACTIVITY UPDATE: SPRING 2009

**PREPARED BY:
THE ALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS AND COUNTIES**

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ADVOCACY

RURAL MATTERS

Following up the success of the national symposium, Rural Matters! Forging Healthy Canadian Communities, the AAMDC was very proud to release the report *One Vision, Many Voices: How to Build a Sustainable Rural Canada* in early March 2009.

Rural Matters! was an opportunity for us to talk about the challenges and opportunities that we face as rural Canadians. Over the course the symposium, more than 800 delegates helped set the 30 key priorities for rural Canada and 7 recommendations on how to build a sustainable rural Canada. The report is not designed to be the solution to every challenge in rural Canada, but to act as a catalyst for actions that will sustain a rural way of life.

Rural Matters! demonstrated that there are many strong and intelligent voices across rural Canada and with those voices, there is a clear vision of a strong, vibrant and sustainable rural Canada. This report is just one step in maintaining the momentum of the symposium by outlining the ideas, priorities and recommendations of rural Canada.

One Vision, Many Voices was adopted into the FCM's Rural Advocacy Strategy at their National Board of Directors Meeting and is now being distributed across Canada to decision-makers, rural organizations and community leaders who are urged to act on the report's recommendations and to work to create the kind of rural Canada that this nation needs. Copies of *One Vision, Many Voices* are now available online at www.ruralmatters.ca in both French and English.

LAW ENFORCEMENT FRAMEWORK

In late January, the AAMDC was advised that the Solicitor General would be consulting with stakeholders on a review of the Law Enforcement Framework. This includes a review of service delivery, governance, and funding of police services in Alberta.

The AAMDC received and distributed the "Law Enforcement Discussion Guide" sent to us by the Solicitor General's office. This paper asked for feedback on a review of Service Delivery, Governance and Funding. A bulletin was sent out January 28th asking that all AAMDC members review the paper closely and provide their opinions in a web-survey.

The Board of Director's convened the AAMDC's Standing Issues Committee on Social Policy and Services to ensure that the membership was represented, over and above the responses from the Discussion Guidelines.

The Board of Directors and the members of the Standing Issues Committee met with representatives from the Solicitor General's office, including Parliamentary Assistant Rob Anderson, to discuss the responses from the web survey.

The Solicitor General's office has notified the AAMDC that further rounds of consultation with stakeholders will be undertaken as a new framework begins to take shape.

BUILDING A HIGHWAY NETWORK: WHO PAYS FOR HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS AS A RESULT OF DEVELOPMENT

In October, 2007, Alberta Transportation put forward a new policy entitled Policy TCE-TS 509: Who Pays for Highway Improvements Caused by Single Developments, Multiple Developments, or in Support of New Developments Identified by the Department as Future Work. The policy, developed by Alberta Transportation, is to provide clarity on who should pay:

- When a single development generates traffic volumes that create the need for highway improvements
- When more than one development generates traffic volumes that create the need for highway improvements
- When new developments advance the need for highway improvements or infrastructure identified by the department for future construction.

A number of municipalities were affected by this policy and we saw resolutions come forward for the AAMDC to address the issue with Alberta Transportation. Resolution 3-08S requested that the AAMDC draft a policy paper on the issue. The Standing Issues Committee on Governance, Infrastructure and the Economy was convened to establish principles and begin the process of drafting the paper. CAO's were consulted and a legal opinion of the policy was obtained.

The paper was sent to the Board of Directors, who moved that it be put forward to Spring Convention for acceptance by the membership in the form of an executive resolution. You will find a copy of the paper within your resolution package.

The association would like to thank the members of the Governance, Infrastructure and the Economy Standing Issues Committee for lending their time and expertise to ensuring the paper was a balanced position that could be taken forward to the Board of Directors.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN OF RURAL MUNICIPAL ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

On January 24, 2008, the Government of Alberta released Alberta's 2008 Climate Change Strategy. The strategy was developed through a year-long consultation process involving multiple stakeholders and members of the public.

One of the goals of the strategy is to "reduce greenhouse gas emissions by transforming how we use energy, applying energy efficient solutions, and conserving energy." To do this, the strategy outlines that the Government of Alberta must provide capacity building support to municipalities to identify emission reduction strategies for inclusion in municipal plans and bylaws.

To begin this capacity building process, Alberta Environment and the AAMDC partnered to undertake an environmental scan of climate change and energy efficiency initiatives in rural municipalities. In the fall of 2008, several CAOs in AAMDC member municipalities were contacted to participate in a telephone survey, and the results were compiled into a report entitled *Rural Municipal Action on Climate Change* that was distributed to the membership in February, 2009.

Member participation in the environmental scan was essential to understanding the current situation and what challenges and opportunities exist in reaching a goal of reduced emissions. Moving forward, the AAMDC is working with Alberta Environment and the AUMA to develop a Municipal Climate Change Action Plan. This will enable municipalities to contribute to greater reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

RURAL CONNECTIVITY

Having rural areas connected to the Internet is vital for economic development efforts, attracting our young people to stay in rural areas, and a reality of today's world to be sustainable into the future. For these reasons, the AAMDC makes rural connectivity a priority.

At the end of November, Alberta Agriculture announced two new funding programs to assist rural communities, which will be available over the next three years. The *Rural Connections: Community Broadband Pilot Program* consists of \$9 million in new funding to targeted rural communities for projects that enable access to reasonable high-speed broadband service.

The second funding program is the *Rural Community Adaptation Grant Program*. The Rural Community Adaptation Grant Program is available to rural communities to help them adapt and transition due to economic circumstances or challenges they are facing.

The 2009 Federal Budget released on Jan. 27 committed almost \$9 billion in new funding over the next two years to municipal priority issues. \$225 million of those dollars will be committed towards broadband Internet. The AAMDC will be following-

up on this announcement through the FCM to determine how much of that funding has been set-aside for Alberta.

MUNICIPAL SPENDING IN ALBERTA: A RE-EXAMINATION

Earlier in 2008, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) released their *Alberta Municipal Spending Watch* report, which evaluated all Albertan municipalities spending over the 2000-2006 timeframe.

In response to member requests to refute claims made against their municipalities, the AAMDC hired Nichols Consulting to draft a response report entitled *Municipal Spending in Alberta: A Re-examination*.

The joint AAMDC/AUMA report is now released and available on the AAMDC website. The report is a revealing read concerning levels of municipal spending and the AAMDC encourages all to read it.

Municipal Spending in Alberta: A Re-examination shows that many assumptions and methods used in the CFIB's report do not portray reality for municipal governments. Timelines seem to be chosen to maximize their argument, the report does not take into account increased health, safety and environmental standards placed upon municipalities, and it ignores the fact that maintenance and development of transportation systems depend greatly on other factors beyond population growth.

BUILDING CANADA FUND (BCF)

On August 29, 2008, the Premier and the Federal Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities announced the signing of the Building Canada Framework Agreement.

Under this agreement, the Government of Canada will provide more than 840 million dollars toward infrastructure initiatives in Alberta. Of this amount, approximately 88 million dollars will be allocated to smaller-scale projects in communities of less than 100,000 residents. This amount will be matched by Alberta, for a total of 176 million dollars.

The Canada-Alberta Framework Agreement addresses infrastructure priorities such as roads and highways, bridges, public transit, water and sewer systems, green energy and community initiatives. This funding is in addition to the amounts from the Gas Tax Fund and the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund already being provided to Alberta.

Ministers and municipal association presidents from across the prairies, including AAMDC President Don Johnson, met with the Federal Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities, John Baird, in Vancouver. The meeting was held to discuss moving forward with the Building Canada Fund and what could be done to speed up the process.

The AAMDC was pleased to announce that applications for the Alberta Building Canada Fund Communities Component were being accepted between January 5, 2009 and March 15, 2009. The AAMDC membership was notified when the website was opened to accept applications through a member bulletin.

FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES (FCM)

Since November 2008, the AAMDC continues to work with the FCM to ensure the needs of rural Alberta are represented at a federal level. President Johnson continues to serve as chair of the FCM Rural Forum and a member of the executive.

In early March, the Rural Matters! National Symposium report *One Vision, Many Voices: How to Build a Sustainable Rural Canada* was presented at the FCM National Board of Directors Meeting. During that meeting, *One Vision, Many Voices*, was adopted by the FCM as official policy to the Rural Advocacy Strategy.

Earlier this year, the FCM passed a resolution calling for the review of the Navigable Waters Protection Act. One of the most important recommendations was the need for a new definition of the term “navigable water”. A proposed new definition was developed through discussions with municipalities affected by the Act’s current application.

When the Federal Budget was released in late January 2009, it was announced that “efficiencies will be introduced through legislative amendments to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which has not been substantially amended since 1886”.

The AAMDC, along with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), was instrumental in shaping these recommendations. Credit must also be given to Alberta Transportation, who had completed extensive research and provided recommendations that were used in the development of AAMDC & FCM’s position.

In addition to President Johnson’s role, the AAMDC is represented on the FCM Board of Directors by Reeve Tim Stone of Saddle Hills County. The AAMDC will continue to work with the FCM in raising the rural profile across Canada.

ALBERTA URBAN MUNICIPALITIES ASSOCIATION

The AAMDC is the voice for rural Alberta—an authority and advocate for rural issues. The work of the AAMDC reflects the interests and priorities of its members through unified advocacy. Our strong relationship with the Government of Alberta and the respect it generates helps us to continue to positively influence policy decisions.

At the 2008 AUMA Convention, a resolution passed directing their Executive to adjust their bylaws so that rural municipalities will be able to be full AUMA members. These bylaws will come forward for final approval at the 2009 convention. The AAMDC believes that having two associations best represents Alberta’s

municipalities. The great diversity between a city and a geographically large county necessitates separate representation.

This becomes evident when examining some of their current initiatives. The AAMDC's member-driven mandate on certain issues often does not align with the AUMA's. The AAMDC is committed to working together with the AUMA in the future as both urban and rural municipalities have equally important roles to play in the future of the province. We will continue to work on joint committees and initiatives with AUMA where the associations have equal input into their formation and direction.

The AAMDC takes its values of transparency, accountability and responsiveness seriously. In upholding those values we have declined participation initiatives such as the AUMA's Task Force on Local Governance and the Draft Framework for a Provincial/Municipal Sustainability Partnership Agreement. However, we continue to monitor these projects. Further, the AAMDC Board of Directors continually looks to ensure we address these issues in a way that more closely align with member expectations and the overall member-driven mandate of the AAMDC.

We are the voice for rural Alberta and are best suited to represent the rural perspective and look forward to continuing our proven track record of representing all of our members, both large and small.

INTEGRATED COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY PLANS (ICSPs)

As part of the Gas Tax Fund (previously the New Deal for Cities and Communities) all Alberta municipalities were required to complete an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) by December 31, 2008. However, as the deadline approached, Alberta Transportation had many municipalities requesting an extension of the deadline to ensure completion. During December, it was determined that an extension would be provided to all municipalities until March 31, 2010, the end of the original Gas Tax Agreement.

In response to Resolution 15-05F, the AAMDC released its ICSP Toolkit in March 2007. This Toolkit equips municipalities with the resources required to develop a long-range plan focusing on the ICSP's four dimensions of sustainability: environment, culture, social and economic. The toolkit program is available for downloading under Resources > Toolkits on the AAMDC website www.aamdc.com.

AAMDC's ICSP Toolkit has been accessed by over half of the membership and over two dozen other municipalities. The Toolkit has had national exposure with its demonstration as part of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Community Energy Planning Mission and the Sustainable Communities Conference 2008.

The Association successfully commercialized the toolkit. The Northwest Territories Association of Communities purchased a license to develop the ICSP tool in order to make it applicable to their unique planning needs.

TRANSPORTATION AND VEHICLE INFORMATION SYSTEM (TRAVIS)

The TRAVIS system is a complex program that supports the overweight and over-dimensional permitting of commercial traffic within Alberta.

Alberta Transportation (AT) is currently working to extend its permitting system, TRAVIS, for use by Alberta municipalities. Alberta Transportation is working on the final phase of the TRAVIS project which will include providing permits for travel on municipal roads. Alberta Transportation is well into the design stage and a working prototype is expected for March/April 2009. The complete system should be ready in the fall of 2009

Pilot programs of the new system will be launched soon, with AT beginning to issue permits using the prototype system for travel on roads within the County of Grande Prairie, Saddle Hills County, the Municipal District of Spirit River, Birch Hills County, as well as the City of Grand Prairie. This will provide a good platform for other municipalities to observe the system

WATER FOR LIFE STRATEGY

The AAMDC has always supported the *Water for Life Strategy* as a positive step for sustainable domestic and agricultural water consumption. The *Water for Life Renewal Strategy* was designed to re-examine the strategic intent of the three-year-old *Water for Life Strategy*. In June, 2007 the Alberta Water Council (AWC) and Minister Renner of Alberta Environment launched the Renewal engagement process to ensure the strategy was still relevant in Alberta considering economic growth, increased population and changing water needs.

On January 30, 2008, the Alberta Water Council (AWC) released its report *Water for Life: Recommendations for Renewal*. The AWC is a multi-stakeholder group tasked by the Minister of Environment with implementing the 2003 Water for Life strategy, and includes an AAMDC representative. '*Recommendations for Renewal*' is the result of extensive consultation with Albertans to re-energize and re-focus the Water for Life strategy. The renewed Water for Life strategy was ultimately released by the Government of Alberta on November 19, 2008.

Additionally, on November 19, 2008, the AWC released a report entitled *Strengthening Partnerships: A Shared Governance Framework for Water for Life Collaborative Partnerships*. This report is a review of the multi-stakeholder partnerships that work together to achieve the goals of the *Water for Life* strategy.

The AAMDC continues to play an active role on the AWC, as represented by Director Dwight Oliver. In addition, many AAMDC members represent their local and regional issues through participation in Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) and various watershed stewardship groups. The Association continues to encourage members to participate in consultations related to the Water for Life Strategy. Past

input has included the completion of the Renewal Strategy Workbook and the New Wetland Policy Workbook, attendance at the Wetland Policy Workshops, and input to the AWC through letters, surveys and meeting attendance.

SEPTAGE MODEL PROCESS PILOT PROJECT

The AAMDC has been involved in two important septage-related projects in the past five years: the 2004 *AAMDC Model Process Reference Document to Guide Municipal Consideration of Subdivision and Development Using Private Sewage Treatment Systems*, and the 2006 *Alberta Septage Facility and Hauler Inventory Project Final Report*. Both documents are available in the Report Archives on our website at www.aamdc.com under Advocacy > Publications > Reports.

As a result of the recommendations of these two documents, and on the recommendation of the multi-stakeholder Septage and Onsite Wastewater Strategic Advisory Committee, the Model Process Pilot Project was announced at the Spring 2008 Convention. In November, the Association worked with Alberta Municipal Affairs regarding granting agreements to determine the three municipalities selected to participate in the pilot project.

The locations selected for the Model Process Pilot Projects were the MD of Rockyview, Lac Ste. Anne County and the County of Vermillion River. The municipalities were selected from a group of very worthy candidates, based on the need to represent the variety of the AAMDC membership in terms of administrative capacity, location, geography and level of development. The municipalities will use the model process as a guide to make good planning decisions when dealing with developments using private septage systems.

SURFACE RIGHTS ACT REVIEW

At the Spring 2006 AAMDC Convention, the membership endorsed Resolution ER3-06S: Review of the Surface Rights Act (SRA). Soon thereafter, the Surface Rights Act Review (SRAR) Task Force was struck by the AAMDC executive.

The Task Force report, *Digging Deeper: Bringing Alberta's Surface Rights Act into the 21st Century*, was supported by AAMDC membership at the Spring 2007 Convention in Resolution 10-07S.

On July 15, 2008, the Government of Alberta announced that an MLA committee will assist the Alberta government with implementation of key priorities of Alberta's Land-use Framework, including the development of a transportation and utility corridors strategy, a recreation strategy and a review of landowner's rights legislation. The committee is scheduled to spend eight months working on critical priorities to ensure the policy that flows from the Land-use Framework responds to a broad range of interests and concerns.

The committee is chaired by Evan Berger, MLA for Livingstone-Macleod and Parliamentary Assistant for Sustainable Resource Development, and reports back to Minister Morton. One aspect of this committee's work will be a review of the Surface Rights Act.

When the AAMDC determined that there would not be any public consultations regarding this review, we made every effort to ensure that the Association's position paper, *Digging Deeper: Bringing Alberta's Surface Rights Act into the 21st Century*, was readily available for use as a basis for the Act's review.

In December 2008, the AAMDC Board of Directors met with Evan Berger. During this meeting, *Digging Deeper* was discussed as well as member concerns with the Alberta Recreation Corridors Coordinating Committee. The AAMDC will continue to use every opportunity available in advocating the recommendations of *Digging Deeper*.

PROVINCIAL LAND-USE FRAMEWORK

After 18 months of stakeholder consultation, the Government of Alberta released the *Draft Land Use Framework* in the Spring of 2008. The *Framework* outlines key strategies to improve land-use planning in the province

The AAMDC gathered feedback from members on this Draft LUF, and submitted a survey with the Association's thoughts and concerns on the document. Since then, the AAMDC has been in close contact with staff at Sustainable Resource Development regarding the progress of the LUF. Minister Morton has requested nominees from the AAMDC for representatives to sit on the Northeast and South Regional Advisory Councils. The AAMDC submitted three names for each RAC, and has been assured one seat will be available on each RAC for an AAMDC representative.

Based on the consultations, the Government of Alberta released the final version of the *Land-use Framework* on December 3, 2008.

As the Government of Alberta moves forward in implementing the *Framework*, the AAMDC will continue to be involved in stakeholder consultations to ensure the interests of rural municipalities are represented.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES FUNDING REVIEW

In September 2008, the province established a three-member MLA committee to work with libraries to review and make recommendations on maintaining a strong, accessible library service that is essential to supporting lifelong learning, development of our youth and the promotion of healthy communities.

Stakeholder consultations with over 300 participants were conducted in 11 locations across the province. Although the AAMDC was not invited to be part of the session, municipal representation was achieved at all of the sessions.

As follow up and to ensure member concerns brought forward through resolutions are considered, the AAMDC has submitted a letter to Minister Danyluk for his consideration once the final review report from the MLA committee is received.

The AAMDC will continue to advocate for its membership to ensure that the best interests of municipalities are represented.

AMBULANCE REVIEW

On May 29, 2008, it was announced that ambulance service responsibilities will be transferred from the province's municipalities to the provincial government. The transition will take full effect on April 1, 2009. During the process of the transition, the AAMDC participated in a monthly conference call with the Transition Team at Alberta Health Services.

While the initial transition is nearly complete, the AAMDC will continue to monitor the status of ambulance service in rural Alberta. It is anticipated that regulations will come forward that will allow for input. In particular, the association is anticipating the First Responders Regulation and will monitor any regulations that apply toward emergency medical responders and volunteer fire fighters.

ELECTED OFFICIALS EDUCATION PROGRAM

The AAMDC in partnership with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) continues to deliver the Elected Officials Education Program (EOEP) through the formation of a jointly owned subsidiary. Incorporated in 2007 and under the supervision of the Registrar, the Alberta Elected Official Education Program Corporation oversees corporate and program administration responsibilities of the EOEP.

Since its launch in January 2008, thirteen courses have been offered to Alberta's municipal elected officials, with 8 more planned for 2009. Four more courses are yet to be developed and members will be asked to participate in a survey to identify education areas of interest. The EOEP was developed to provide municipally elected officials with an opportunity to broaden their knowledge and skills, raising the quality of municipal government and enabling those in office to effectively achieve the goals of their community.

The EOEP continues to look for ways to best serve the needs of elected officials This includes developing a strategic business plan to address accessibility issues. The AEOEPC recently approved implementing regional pilots and is also investigating e-learning opportunities.

STANDING ISSUES COMMITTEES

The Standing Issues Committees are structured so they can be called to assist in the formulation of AAMDC policy and positions. They are task oriented resources that can be brought together at the call of the AAMDC Board or in response to a member driven initiative to better support the work of the Board of Directors.

This year, in response to the March 2008 election, the Standing Issues Committees were re-aligned to compliment the provincial Cabinet Policy Committees (CCP's). The new committees are now Governance, Infrastructure and the Economy; Social Services; and Resources and the Environment and are composed of the AAMDC Board and member representatives from each of the five districts.

The Governance, Infrastructure and the Economy Committee gathered together this year to examine the effects of a provincial transportation policy and potential policy paper. The AAMDC Board appreciates the assistance of members of the Standing Issues Committee in guiding the direction of the Association and will endeavour to engage these committees more frequently in the future.

Business Services

JUBILEE INSURANCE AGENCIES LTD.

Jubilee has made a significant investment in technology on behalf of members over the past 14 months. With such investment comes the need to iron out service delivery and proper implementation. Over the course of the next year, members will see first hand, electronic tools helping greatly towards efficiencies in managing their insurance portfolios.

The past year has been especially challenging with respect to losses on member property. Increases in replacement cost values coupled with challenges in employee retention have fostered a reevaluation of Jubilee RiskPro course direction. Such change in direction towards addressing member's immediate needs in this area will provide much needed support for Jubilee to negotiate the best possible renewal terms for the 2009-2010 insurance term as well as provide members with targeted training in these important areas.

The financial position of Jubilee remains strong. Significant effort has been made towards providing insurance to rural Alberta's non-profit sectors outside of direct municipal operations. Such efforts when combined with clear and concise underwriting information and approval processes, provide a strengthening and widening of the member base. This increases Jubilee's position to present itself to the global insurance market with greater volumes that have resulted from a formal disciplined approach in adding members to the program.

TRADE DIVISION

The Trade Division is on pace for one of its best years on record, increasing revenues from 39 million in 2007-08 to a projected 41 million in 2008-09.

Over the last year, the Trade Division increased its number of suppliers (over 116) and has seen an increase in membership and member usage. These results demonstrate that members value the services the AAMDC Trade Division offers.

PRAIRIE FUEL ADVISORS

On June 1, 2008, the AADMC officially took possession of the former Prairie Fuel Advisors Inc renamed Prairie Fuel Advisors (PFA). The program is designed to assist municipalities across the Prairie Provinces in managing their fuel purchases by entering into volume contracts with suppliers to achieve better pricing and still benefit local dealers.

This purchase presented the opportunity for members to take advantage of the favourable terms from the fuel supply companies such as, price, payment terms and delivery. PFA has increased the number of members utilizing the program by promoting the fuel supply program through individual visits, tender responses and aligning itself with other organizations.

Since the Trade acquisition, the litre volume sold has increased in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The AAMDC membership has also been taking advantage of PFA program as it has seen an 18% litre volume increase since the acquisition.

ADVISORY SERVICES

The AAMDC receives a number of enquiries from members on a monthly basis for recommended consultants. Member support of AAMDC providing assistance in consultant selection was evident through the results of the 2006 Member Satisfaction Survey.

The goal of the Advisory Services program is to assist municipalities in carrying out new initiatives and provide internal services that the municipality may not have the time, resources or capability. As such, the AAMDC has established relationships with 11 qualified preferred partners to provide services from human resources support to policy development to organizational services.

The AAMDC believes the addition of these advisory services will provide added benefits to members through supplemented municipal capacity and quality assurance.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the AAMDC Board of Directors,



Donald W. Johnson

President