

# Municipal Governance

## During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Frequently Asked Questions – December 18, 2020

While we continue to navigate the ever-evolving COVID-19 pandemic together, Municipal Affairs remains committed to issuing regular updates to address frequently asked questions as well as provide new information or resources as they become available. For the most up-to-date information on the COVID-19 situation in Alberta, visit [alberta.ca/COVID19](https://alberta.ca/COVID19).

If you would like a specific issue addressed in an upcoming update, please email your request to [ma.lgsmail@gov.ab.ca](mailto:ma.lgsmail@gov.ab.ca).

### Municipal Affairs Updates

Previous COVID-19 updates are available online at: [www.alberta.ca/municipal-government-resources.aspx](https://www.alberta.ca/municipal-government-resources.aspx)

### Christmas Closure



**Will there be support from Municipal Affairs over the holidays should any urgent matters arise or if there are changes to the current health orders?**

**YES.** Although our office will be closed from December 25 to January 4, you can email any time sensitive inquiries to [ma.lgsmail@gov.ab.ca](mailto:ma.lgsmail@gov.ab.ca) inbox, which will continue to be monitored.

As we enter into this holiday season, take time to rest and reflect on the great work you have done in being responsive to your citizens and businesses during this challenging year.

### 2021 Municipal Elections



**The 2021 nomination period starts when municipal offices reopen in January 2021. For municipalities with nomination deposit bylaws, the *Local Authorities Election Act (LAEA)* requires nomination deposits to be in cash, certified cheques, and money orders. Are there other paperless options available to encourage the current COVID-19 pandemic?**

**YES.** On December 14, 2020, the Honourable Tracy Allard, Minister of Municipal Affairs, signed [Ministerial Order No. MSD:103/20](#) to amend specific requirements under Section 30(1) of the *LAEA* to allow deposits to be provided to the returning officer by in-person payments using a debit card or a credit card, in addition to the current cash, certified cheque, or money order options. This modification is only in effect for the 2021 general election year.

**If a nomination deposit bylaw states the form of payment, do municipalities need to amend their bylaw to include the new methods of payment?**

**YES.** The MO No. MSD:103/20 does not amend a local bylaw. If a municipality's local bylaw includes provisions that limit the way in which payments can be made, the bylaw would need to be amended to enable debit and credit card payments for 2021 only.

### Public Libraries Resources

Resources are available at:  
[www.alberta.ca/public-library-services.aspx](https://www.alberta.ca/public-library-services.aspx)

### Can our municipal office remain open to accept nomination forms?

**YES.** Employers shall require employees to work from home, unless their physical presence is required to effectively operate the workplace. Municipal offices could remain open to accept nominations papers. Determining what constitutes an essential service remains a local operational decision, and individual municipalities are encouraged to choose a process for accepting nomination forms that they deem appropriate. Nomination forms can be accepted at specific times set by the returning officer, by appointment, or at a secure drop box.

## General Questions

### Can we provide an option for households to rent public facilities (pools, indoor rinks) for personal use?



**NO.** Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health's current recommendation is that municipal recreation facilities should not be rented out to individual households, as this is difficult to determine whether social gathering restrictions are being adhered to.

### Are there resources available to ensure municipal messages are consistent with the provincial public health guidance?

**YES.** The Government of Alberta collection of COVID-19 visual resources is updated and also includes a new mandatory masking poster that municipalities and your community partners may use. Information posters and fact sheets can be accessed and downloaded [online](#).



### In order to adhere to social distancing requirements, our municipality has moved council meetings to the community hall. Given the current orders restrict the use of community halls, is council required to change the location?

**YES.** As community halls are to remain closed except for a permitted use, councils should conduct meetings electronically per the [Public Meeting Procedures \(COVID-19 Suppression\) Regulation](#). If meetings have already been scheduled to take place in the community hall, councils must call a special meeting to change the location of the meeting. If time does not permit a special meeting to be called, municipalities should review their procedural bylaw, which may set out the process for adjourning a meeting should council not achieve quorum.

### Relaunch Status Map

Map reporting formats are updated. To review the level of risk in your community, rate of COVID-19 cases, number of active cases, and current measures in place, visit: [www.alberta.ca/maps/covid-19-status-map.htm](http://www.alberta.ca/maps/covid-19-status-map.htm)

## Additional Resources

The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) continue to be a valuable resource for municipalities.

RMA's COVID-19 response hub is available at <https://rmaalberta.com/about/covid-19-response-hub>.

AUMA's updated guide is available at [www.auma.ca/covid19](http://www.auma.ca/covid19).

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities also has a list of links and resources for municipalities available at [www.fcm.ca/en/resources/covid-19-resources-municipalities](http://www.fcm.ca/en/resources/covid-19-resources-municipalities).

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