

Government of Alberta ■

Municipal Affairs

Municipal Sustainability Strategy update

May 17, 2010

Representatives of the MSS working group include:

AAMDC: Gerald Rhodes, Executive Director, Kim Heyman, Director of Advocacy and Communications

ARMAA: Pat Vincent, Director

AUMA: John McGowan, Chief Executive Officer, Sue Welke, Director, Policy and Advocacy,

LGAA: Carol Revega, Director, Town of Westlock Secretary/Treasurer, Local Government Administration Association.

ASVA: Sue Evans, representing the Alberta Summer Villages Association and Municipal Administrator for the Summer Villages of Seba Beach and Lakeview.

Alberta Municipal Affairs: Michael Merritt, ADM, Local Government Services, Gary Sandberg, Executive Director, Municipal Services Branch, Municipal Services, Theresa Ostrum, Director, Stakeholder Relations and Sustainability

Meeting highlights:

The Working Group continues its review of each of the four key questions within its mandate. In recognition of significant municipal interest in this process, the Working Group recognized a need to provide a more detailed status update of the progress made to date. The following summary is a preliminary overview of the working group's intended direction thus far:

What basic services should a municipality provide?

- In recognition of the significant variation in local priorities and circumstances across Alberta, the Working Group has agreed that developing a listing of services that a municipality must provide may not be practical. Instead, the Working Group has reoriented its efforts toward the development of a list of those services most commonly provided by municipalities.
- The intent of this list is to provide increased awareness regarding the services most often provided by local governments, and the ways in which those services may be provided, recognizing that local governments are accountable to their electors for choosing the specific services delivered in a municipality.
- A draft list is currently under discussion by the Working Group, and includes services such as roads and streets, waste management, and water/sewer.

What constitutes a viable and sustainable municipality and how can these be measured?

- The Working Group has developed a preliminary listing of measures of viability, which could be used to identify when a municipality might be trending toward non-viability. Municipalities identified by these measures could be contacted by Municipal Affairs to discuss options for addressing any concerns.
- Some of the measures under consideration include debt and debt servicing levels, grants as a percentage of total municipal revenue, and population trends.
- The Working Group has also developed a preliminary list of qualitative indicators that will feed into the development of a self-assessment toolkit to be developed as part of the Capacity Building phase of the Municipal Sustainability Strategy.
- Qualitative indicators are being developed in areas such as Governance, Operational/Administrative Capacity, and Regional Cooperation.

What capacity building tools are required?

- The Working Group has developed an inventory of capacity building tools currently available through Municipal Affairs, the municipal associations, and other municipally-related entities.
- The Working Group is identifying potential gaps where additional tools may be required, and has agreed that Municipal Affairs and the municipal associations will collaborate to develop new tools where reasonable.
- The Working Group has also agreed that the key new capacity building tool to be developed is a Self-Assessment Toolkit, which would assist municipalities to identify areas of strength, and where and how they might improve. The toolkit would be linked to the inventory of capacity building tools, to provide assistance in developing go-forward plans where areas of improvement are identified.

What restructuring processes should be used?

- The Working Group is still in detailed discussion on this question, but has agreed in principle that its work will lead to a proposal for a new “Viability Process” that will include:
 - A focus on solutions, through a strong partnership of neighbouring municipalities, municipal associations, and Municipal Affairs;
 - More community engagement and involvement, including neighbouring municipalities;
 - A focus on community development and community identify; and
 - Probable legislative changes.