CAO Handbook

For Alberta Municipal Chief Administrative Officers

Alberta

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Introduction

Purpose of the Handbook

The purpose of this guide is to provide a quick reference to the roles and responsibilities of a municipal chief administrative officer (CAO) and the legislation that affects municipalities. This guide contains a wide range of information including legislative requirements for council minutes, bylaws, public access to information, financial reporting, budget preparation, and information on how provincial legislation impacts municipal activities.

This guide should be viewed as a supplement to the *Municipal Government Act* (*MGA*) and other legislation affecting municipalities, and should not be construed as legal advice for any specific situation. It is recommended to always consult a specific piece of legislation directly for guidance and, if necessary, discuss a particular situation with the municipality's legal counsel. In the event of any inconsistency between the information presented here and any Act or Regulation, the Act or Regulation shall prevail.

> Note: A number of amendments were recently made to the *MGA*. Change management documents that outline the specific changes and provide additional detail for municipal administrators can be found at **www.alberta.ca/*MGA*-change-management.aspx**

CAOs have a multi-faceted role, and although some of these roles may be familiar, many may be new. In addition to serving as a guide to the many resources available for assistance and support, this document broadly explores many areas of CAO responsibility and endeavours to answer questions frequently faced in Alberta municipalities.

Understanding the Political System

Role of Alberta Municipal Affairs

Alberta Municipal Affairs works with Alberta municipalities, other government departments and local organizations to achieve accountable local government and well-managed, collaborative, and safe communities for Albertans.

The Government of Alberta is responsible for establishing the legislative framework for local government and provides information about the roles and responsibilities of municipalities under the *MGA*. It also provides information to taxpayers and electors within this framework. However, unless warranted by extreme circumstances, the department does not typically intervene in matters within the authority of local governments. Municipalities have the autonomy to manage their own affairs and to make decisions they think will best meet the needs of their communities within the parameters established in their enabling legislation. In other words, municipalities have flexibility in how they operate but must follow the standards established in legislation.

The autonomy and independence afforded to municipalities under the *MGA* is balanced with requirements for transparency and public accountability, recognizing that municipalities are accountable to their citizens first and foremost.

For more information on Alberta Municipal Affairs, please visit the Municipal Affairs website at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca.

Provincial Government Legislation

A CAO should be familiar with numerous pieces of legislation and have a fundamental understanding of how this legislation pertains to municipal government, with a working knowledge of the most relevant provisions. A CAO should periodically review these statutes and regulations in order to understand the responsibility of the municipality. While this is not a complete list, the legislation that is most pertinent to municipal government is as follows:

- ***Municipal Government Act***

The *MGA* is the legislative framework under which all municipalities and municipal entities across the Province of Alberta operate. It is the most applicable piece of legislation for municipalities and the one with which the CAO should be most familiar. The *MGA* provides the governance structure for cities, towns, villages, municipal districts, specialized municipalities, and other forms of local government. It lays the foundation for how municipalities operate, how municipal councils function, and how citizens can work with their municipalities. The current *MGA* is one of Alberta's largest pieces of legislation, containing 21 parts and more than 700 sections.

The *MGA* contains three major "themes" or areas of focus:

- governance;

- assessment and taxation; and

- planning and development.

- ***Local Authorities Election Act***

The Local Authorities Election Act governs municipal elections by establishing procedures around campaigning, voting and counting of votes.

- ***Emergency Management Act***

The *Emergency Management Act (EMA)* is the legislation that governs measures taken during an emergency and requires municipalities to establish an emergency plan. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the provincial government, and local authorities. The *EMA* provides the authority for the granting of additional powers during a state of emergency or a state of local emergency and governs the coming into force, expiration, and termination of these states of emergency.

- ***Employment Standards Code***

The Employment Standards Code establishes Alberta's minimum standards of employment in many areas including payment of wages, hours of work, overtime, vacation and holidays, leave, and termination of employment. It establishes the processes by which an employee can seek recourse if the standards have not been met.

- ***Cemeteries Act***

Awareness of the *Cemeteries Act* and its associated regulations may be necessary as some municipalities own and operate cemeteries. This legislation controls the disposition of human remains, ensures cemeteries meet the requirements of local authorities, and protects consumers who invest in pre-need cemetery supplies and services.

- ***Forest and Prairie Protection Act***

The *Forest and Prairie Protection Act* enables the protection of the forests and prairies of Alberta from wildfire. This legislation makes the chief elected official, each councillor and the CAO, by virtue of their offices, fire guardians in and for the municipal district except that part of the municipal district that is within a provincial forest protection area.

- ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act***

The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act* establishes the legislative framework for the Government of Alberta's general policy on access to information and the protection of personal information in the public sector. It provides for public accountability through a right of access to records under the control of public bodies and mandates how a public body is to collect, use and disclose an individual's personal information.

- ***Highways Development and Protection Act***

The *Highways Development and Protection Act* lays out the responsibilities and powers of the authorities that oversee the various categories of highways and roads in Alberta. It also prohibits and limits certain developments near provincial highways and roads.

- ***Interpretation Act***

This Act sets out guidelines for interpreting legislation (various presumptions, definitions, rules of statutory interpretation and construction) that apply to all Alberta Acts and Regulations, and who can act under legislation.

- ***Libraries Act***

In Alberta, public library service is governed by the *Libraries Act* and Libraries Regulation. The *Libraries Act* sets the legal framework for public library service through the establishment of library boards, who manage library service on behalf of the municipality. The Libraries Regulation sets out sound management practices for library boards.

Additional information on the roles and responsibilities of municipal councils and library boards is available at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/public_library_legislation.

• **_Oaths of Office Act_**

This Act applies to oaths of allegiance, official oaths and judicial oaths. It provides that any person required by statute to make an oath is permitted to make a solemn affirmation instead of taking an oath.

• **_Occupational Health and Safety Act_**

The _Occupational Health and Safety Act_ sets out the framework for health and safety in Alberta's workplaces, including municipalities.

• **_Peace Officers Act_**

This legislation establishes the roles of peace officers (non-police) in Alberta and allows different levels of government the opportunity to obtain peace officer status for community safety enhancement and specialized law enforcement needs. This Act establishes the requirement for authorization of employers and appointment of peace officers including the application process, suspension/cancellations, employer liability and responsibility, the role of the Director of Law Enforcement, oversight process and the mechanism for public complaints. It also establishes the offences and penalties under the Act.

• **_Safety Codes Act_**

The _Safety Codes Act_ establishes a unifying framework for the administration of ten safety disciplines, each having their own safety codes and standards. The Public Safety Division of Alberta Municipal Affairs administers the framework established in the _Safety Codes Act_, including development of codes and standards adopted in Alberta, providing advice and technical support related to the Act to the public, industry, all municipalities and the Safety Codes Council, and monitoring the work of municipalities, corporations and agencies that administer the Act or provide services under the Act. The Public Safety Division also manages agencies under contract to provide services such as permits and inspections for municipalities that do not administer the Act in their jurisdiction.

• **_Traffic Safety Act_**

The _Traffic Safety Act_ promotes safety on provincial highways, the definition of which includes any thoroughfare, street, road, trail, avenue, parkway, driveway, viaduct, lane, alley, square, bridge, causeway, trestle way or other place or any part of any of them, whether publicly or privately owned, or sidewalk that the public is ordinarily entitled or permitted to use.

• **_Weed Control Act_**

The _Weed Control Act_ is the enabling legislation that defines the actions municipalities in Alberta must take with respect to weed control, issuances of notices and the conditions necessary for appeal.

How to obtain copies of the legislation

Alberta Queen's Printer is the official publisher of Alberta's laws and the Alberta Gazette, and partners with Government of Alberta ministries to produce and distribute various government publications. The most current legislation is available for purchase, viewing or printing at www.qp.alberta.ca. The Office of the Queen's Printer is located in Suite 700; Park Plaza Building 10611 - 98 Avenue NW in Edmonton.

The Alberta Gazette

The Alberta Gazette is the "official newspaper" of the Government of Alberta. It consists of two parts, Part I and Part II, and is published twice per month by Alberta Queen's Printer. It includes new and amending regulations, assorted government notices, and private sector public notices that are required by statute to be published.

Domestic Trade Agreements

Alberta municipalities are party to two trade agreements: the New West Partnership Trade Agreement and the Canada Free Trade Agreement (CFTA). Through these agreements, the province has sought to reduce trade barriers, enhance labour mobility and open investment opportunities for Albertans and Alberta businesses. The CFTA came into effect on July 1, 2017 and replaced the Agreement of Internal Trade that had been in force since 1995.

More information on how the procurement practices of Alberta municipalities are impacted by these trade agreements is available at www.alberta.ca/alberta-trade-agreements.aspx.

Fundamental Role of a Municipal Council

As described in the *MGA*, council's responsibilities are comprised of:

Developing and evaluating the policies and programs of the municipality [S. 201(1)(a)]

A role of council is to establish policies on the programs and services to be provided, the level of those services, and the budgetary requirements for those services to be delivered. Council is also responsible for ensuring these programs and services meet their objectives and deliver the desired outcomes.

Carrying out the powers, duties and functions expressly given to council under the Act or any other legislation [S. 201(1)(c)]

Council is responsible for ensuring the municipality acts within its enabling legislation. A municipality can be taken to court by any person if it acts outside its legal authority. As well, council is responsible for ensuring the municipality meets all requirements established in legislation, such as the requirement to hold public hearings on certain matters, develop a budget and levy taxes, appoint an auditor, etc. The legislation establishes minimum requirements; however, council can go beyond these minimums, provided they act within their legislative authority.

Ensuring that the CAO appropriately performs the duties and functions and exercises the powers assigned to the CAO [S. 205(5)]

Council has a responsibility to ensure the CAO is doing the job that he or she has been hired to do, particularly through the legislated annual written performance evaluation process.

The *MGA* provides municipal government with natural person powers for the purpose of exercising their authority. Natural person powers give municipalities similar flexibility to that of individuals and corporations in managing their organizational and administrative affairs. These powers may help a municipality – without the need for more specific legislative authority – enter into agreements and acquire land and equipment. For example, if a municipality has authority to establish a public transit system, it may use natural person powers to contract services and purchase buses. It is important to be aware that natural person powers are not an independent source of authority for a municipality to act in a particular area.

Municipal councils must establish a code of conduct bylaw that governs the conduct of councillors by July 23, 2018. [S. 146.1]. The Councillor Codes of Conduct: A Guide for Municipalities explains the new requirements and what municipalities should consider in meeting those requirements. It includes a Councillor Codes of Conduct Bylaw Template, which can be downloaded and tailored to the specific needs of each municipality.

Responsibilities and Duties of the CAO

Municipal councils are required by legislation to establish, by bylaw, the position of CAO and appoint one or more persons to carry out the powers, duties and functions of the position

[S. 205]. In doing so, council recognizes its fundamental role of setting policy and allowing administration to implement the policy.

The CAO is the administrative head of the municipality, council's advisor on its operations and affairs [S. 207], and is responsible for the administration, operation, financial management, and human resource management of a municipality. The CAO is responsible for the implementation of council's decisions and takes care of the everyday work of managing a municipality.

Section 208 of the *MGA* outlines some of the major administrative duties that a CAO must perform.

There are additional duties and responsibilities detailed in other sections of the *MGA* as well. For example, the CAO is required to determine the sufficiency of any petitions submitted to a municipal council [S. 226(1)]. The *MGA* also requires that the CAO reports the resignation of a councillor at the first council meeting after receiving it in writing [S. 161]. The examples in this guide are only a partial list of what is required in legislation. It is strongly encouraged that the CAO become familiar with the current *MGA* in order to understand these duties.

Every municipality should have a position description that clearly outlines the CAO's duties and responsibilities. An effective position description defines the responsibility of the job, as well as the results the CAO is expected to deliver.

Council should also have a defined process in place for completing the CAO's performance evaluation. Performance evaluations must be conducted annually [S. 205.1]; they are an opportunity for council to provide feedback to the CAO on performance strengths and on areas that may require improvement.

In every municipality in Alberta, the CAO reports directly to council. All other municipal employees report to the CAO, except for the rare occasions where a designated officer bylaw has been passed specifying that the position reports directly to council [S. 210]. However, this does not preclude other municipal employees, such as the public works manager, from making presentations directly to council, if council wants such a presentation and directs this through the CAO.

The Multi-Faceted Role of the CAO

I.   Responsibilities to Council

Role as Advisor

A key role of the CAO is to advise council and make recommendations regarding all facets of municipal operations. Performing the role of an advisor does not mean telling council what to do or telling councillors what they want to hear. What it does mean is ensuring council is advised in writing of its legislative responsibilities under the *MGA* [S. 208(1)(d)], and providing information on current trends, best practices and approaches other municipalities are using in similar circumstances.

The CAO is the primary advisor to and liaison with council. While it is the council that has final decision-making authority, council should be able to rely on the CAO for well-founded advice and expertise. Council should count on their CAO to obtain the necessary background information, conduct required research and collect any other relevant facts that will assist in its decision making role. While it may not be the CAO who will do all of this, he or she is responsible for ensuring the information provided to council is well organized, understandable, and reflects council's preferred format. The CAO should also be proactive in identifying potential drawbacks (and benefits) when a council is discussing an issue and is intent on making a decision. He or she should be in a position to advise on potential legal and financial consequences and in terms of the potential impact on the community.

The CAO is the contact person if members of council have concerns about how the administration is functioning or about the actions and general conduct of the municipal staff.

Council Decisions

Council meetings are a critical part of the municipality's operations because that is where council publicly deliberates and decides the direction the municipality will take. Indeed, a council meeting held in public at which a quorum is present is the only place that council is able to make decisions that will bind the municipality [S.181]. Given the importance of these meetings, it should be no surprise the CAO will have a key role to play.

The CAO or the CAO's designate is required to attend all meetings of council, and is tasked with a few responsibilities. These include ensuring the minutes are recorded in the English language, without note or comment [S. 208(1)(a)(i)] and that the names of all of the members of council who are present are recorded [S. 208(1)(a)(ii)].

For an in depth guide to preparing meeting minutes, please see Preparation of Meeting Minutes For Council – Legislation and Best Practice.

The CAO will also have other responsibilities associated with council meetings. Municipalities have the authority under the *MGA* to establish a procedure bylaw [S. 145] to provide a standard format for council and council committee meetings and to make it easier for members of council, staff, the media, and the public to understand the decision-making process. A procedure bylaw should provide for the order of business and method of distributing the agenda for council meetings, set rules regarding the proceedings at regular meetings of council, and describe how items may be put on the council agenda.

The agenda is distributed to council members, attendees, the public, and the recording secretary well in advance of the meeting, so they are aware of the items to be discussed and able to prepare for the meeting accordingly. As the public should have access to the agenda package at the same time as council, many municipalities post the agenda for the upcoming meeting on their municipal website or have copies available.

Council may request various reports from administration be presented at a meeting. This may include a financial report, a report regarding the status of a project, or a report about options that are available for any number of issues. When an agenda item requires a decision of council, the CAO is charged with ensuring that all information required has been identified and any recommendations provided (if required) be attached to the agenda. This could be in the form of a report or a request for decision (RFD). A request for decision should include a background sentence or paragraph, a statement of the problem or issue, any findings or conclusions, any recommendations for action, policy implications, financial impact, other impacts that may be specific to the situation, and list who has prepared or reviewed the information.

It is also recommended to use an action list to track actionable resolutions from previous meetings through to their completion.

For more information on agenda preparation as well as a sample agenda, RFD and action list, please see the document entitled Procedure Bylaw and the Agenda.

A special meeting of council may be called from time-to-time. The chief elected official may make the request, or a majority of the council may also put forth a request [S. 194]. In either case, the CAO is required to give proper notice of a special meeting to council and to the public.

All council meetings, including those of council committees, must be conducted in public [S. 197(1)]. However, there are limited exceptions to this rule. Council is entitled to discuss matters within one of the exceptions to disclosure in Division 2 of Part 1 of the *FOIP Act* [S. 197(2)]. Please note that even though council may hold discussion on such matters in a closed meeting, it cannot pass any resolutions or bylaws, with the exception of the motion to revert to the public meeting [S. 197(3)]. If direction is given or a decision reached, then a resolution must be made in the open meeting so that council's direction(s) are recorded and acted on.

For more information, please see Closed Meetings of Council.

Councillors are on council to make decisions, and that means voting on all resolutions and bylaws unless they are required or permitted to abstain from voting [S. 183(1)]. If there is a public hearing on a proposed bylaw or resolution, councillors must abstain from voting on the bylaw or resolution if they were absent from all of a public hearing, and they may abstain if they were absent for a part of a public hearing [S. 184]. Councillors must also abstain from voting on matters in which they have a pecuniary (monetary) interest [S. 169 – 173].

For more information on pecuniary interest, please see the document entitled Pecuniary Interest for Councillors.

Bylaws and Resolutions

Councils may act only through resolution or bylaw [S. 180(1)]. If the municipality requires the authority to enforce something, such as limits on the number of animals allowed on a property, or the rate to be paid for utilities, a bylaw is required. Resolutions are decisions of council. The *MGA* states when certain matters must be addressed by bylaw. If the *MGA* is not explicit on whether a bylaw is required, council may deal with the matter by resolution.

The following provides some examples of important bylaws a municipality should have in place where applicable.

Bylaws	
Procedure Bylaw (Not mandatory)	• Sets the guidelines and structure for council meetings. • Details the responsibilities and expectations of the meeting chair, council members, the CAO, other staff and the public. • Empowers the meeting chair to ensure council meetings are orderly, respectful and efficient.
Tax Rate Bylaw (Mandatory)	• Provides the authority for municipalities to levy municipal taxes.
Utility Bylaw (Not Mandatory)	• Provides the authority for municipalities to collect utility fees, set rates and required deposit amounts, and impose penalties for late payment. • The utility bylaw can also provide details on expected service levels and when arrears will be transferred to the tax roll.
Land-use Bylaw (Mandatory)	• Sets the parameters by which land can be developed. • Establishes when and where permits are required for land improvements. • Details the procedure for appealing decisions on land use.

A municipal bylaw is no different from any other law of the land, and can be enforced with penalties, challenged in court and must comply with higher levels of law. Municipal bylaws are often enforceable through the public justice system, and offenders can be charged with a criminal offence for breach of a bylaw.

It is important to ensure that bylaws are enforced. If a bylaw cannot or will not be enforced, then it should be repealed. For instance, if a municipality has an animal control bylaw and does not have the necessary resources to enforce it appropriately, it should not exist.

For more information on bylaws, please see Basic Principles of Bylaws.

Policy is the collective decisions council makes on a particular subject area over a period of time. Council sets policy when it makes a decision on any matter, and implementation of that policy is the role of the CAO.

The original policies should be indexed in a safe, and copies provided to councillors as well as applicable departments. Policies should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure accuracy and consistency. Once a policy has been approved and adopted by council, it should be cross referenced with the council meeting and/or motion number where it was adopted.

Policies	
Snow Removal Policy	• Sets council's priorities, service levels, and guidelines for snow removal to ensure safe traffic movement within a municipality.
Corporate Credit Card Policy	• Establishes proper checks and balances to protect municipal credit cards from misuse.
Council Remuneration Policy	• Establishes when and what council will be reimbursed for expenses. • Details compensation for council's attendance at board meetings and other meetings with external stakeholders.
Unbudgeted Expenses Policy	• Establishes a procedure for authorizing and verifying expenses not included in the budget. • Required under Section 248(2) of the *MGA*.

Implementing Council Decisions

When council makes a decision, whether it is about adjustments to a program or changes in structure or budgets, the CAO must ensure these changes are implemented. While it may not be the CAO who actually makes the changes, he or she is responsible for making the change happen through the staff of the municipality.

As such, the *MGA* makes it clear that a council must not exercise a power or function or perform a duty that is specifically assigned to the CAO [S. 201(2)]. If the relationship between council and administration of a local government is going to work, both groups must understand, appreciate and respect the roles that each has to play, especially regarding the difference between

council's policy making role, and the CAO's role of implementing policy direction. Without this, it is inevitable that difficulties will be encountered. As a starting point, it is helpful for council members and the CAO to recognize some of the fundamental differences between each other's' roles.

The following table illustrates some of the differences between the roles of council and the CAO.

Council	Chief Administrative Officer
Elected by citizens of the municipality every four years.	Hired and appointed by council based on professional expertise and/ or experience.
Generally speaking, role is part time.	Role is typically full-time but may be part time in smaller municipalities.
Focus is on the four-year mandate: may have been elected on basis of a particular platform and to make changes.	Focus should be on the long-term (beyond the four year election mandate).
Fulfills the political function: interaction with and responding to the community, interaction with other levels of government.	Fulfills the administrative function: implements the decisions of the council and manages the day-to-day operations.
Council provides policy direction and makes the substantive decisions for the municipal corporation.	Provides advice / recommendations to council, implements policy directions and decisions of the council.
Provides specific directions to the CAO.	Ensures council's decisions are carried out; provides specific directions to other staff members; in charge of personnel.
Ensures the local government continues to meet the community's needs and that administration is providing the public with the service level set by council.	Coordinates / oversees the day-to-day operations and administration of the municipality; responsible for employee professional development training.
Approves the three-year financial plan and five-year capital plan budget for the municipality.	Assists council by preparing budget documents and ensures the budget is being properly administered (money is being allocated as per the adopted budget of the municipality).

The relationship between council and administration can become strained if there is a misunderstanding of these roles, particularly when one group attempts to take on the role of the other. For instance, a council member may try to direct staff that reports to the CAO or, in other instances, the CAO may inappropriately respond to the media on behalf of the municipality, depending on the municipality's media/communications policy. These types of situations may be further complicated by different personalities, different agendas and varying points of view.

Examples of Role Confusion

Council	CAO
Directing members of administration other than the CAO.	Becoming involved in political debate or political activity.
Becoming involved in the day to day operations of the municipality.	Setting budgets without council's input during the budget process.
Hiring and firing employees.	Setting policy.
Reprimanding individual municipal staff.	Becoming the spokesperson for council.

Actions can be taken to promote a greater understanding of each other's roles. A CAO may wish to consider the following activities and strategies to foster greater role understanding and teamwork:

1. Orientation of newly elected council/councillor

    Within 90 days of taking the oath of office, a new council and/or councillor must be offered an orientation that provides, at a minimum, the following [S.201.1]:

    - role of municipalities in Alberta;

    - municipal organization and functions;

    - key municipal plans, policies and projects;

    - roles and responsibilities of council and councillors;

    - the municipality's code of conduct;

    - roles and responsibilities of the CAO and staff;

    - budgeting and financial administration;

    - public participation; and

    - any other topic prescribed by the regulations.

An orientation session for municipal elected officials is beneficial to a councillor's term. Orientation sessions provide an opportunity for councillors to seek clarification of their role, add to their knowledge about the municipality's structure and activities, and provide an overview of municipal government. Councillor orientation should serve as a reference for elected officials by way of assisting them in identifying those areas with which they should be familiar.

2. Joint Planning Session/Strategic Planning

Council and administration could consider engaging in a general planning/strategic planning session. Such a session would provide an opportunity to identify priorities for the local government, examine possible changes to local government policies, bylaws, operations, structures and services, and assist in identifying potential amendments to bylaws. In addition, particular services could be examined, if necessary (e.g., recreation, fire service, public works). Planning sessions can also be used to review the financial situation of the municipality, with a view to the annual budget development and adoption process.

This type of planning session should provide an opportunity for the council to establish priorities for the year and for the longer term. It can also serve as a forum through which a common vision/direction can be established not only between the council and the administration but also among the council members. It may also serve as an opportunity for council members and senior administration to share and discuss ideas in a less formal setting and build a team environment. Any initiatives or reports resulting from strategic planning sessions would be brought to a council meeting for further discussion and adoption.

3. Recognition of the Role of the Elected Official

The CAO of a municipality must help establish a healthy relationship with council. As with council members, the CAO and senior administration must respect and value the role of elected officials. The administration needs to recognize they are not the policy–makers. Rather, the administration is there to provide the information and support required for council members to make well informed and thought-out decisions. This means providing thorough, well-researched and accurate information to council members.

4. Accessibility to All Council Members

While CAOs all have different styles, it is important they are accessible to council. It is now a requirement that, when the CAO provides information about the operation or administration of the municipality to one councillor, the information must be provided to all other councillors as soon as practicable [S. 153.1]. Being able to respond to council's questions on a timely basis will go a long way toward strengthening trust and the overall relationship between council and administration. It should be noted, however, not all issues or questions can be resolved by the CAO. Such matters may require a broader discussion as well as a decision from council. This is where a CAO must use his or her professional judgment of whether or not to address the issue themselves or raise the matter as an item on a council meeting agenda.

5. The Importance of Neutrality

   It is important for a CAO to treat all council members in a neutral manner. The CAO must stick with the facts and avoid taking sides. If an issue arises, it is advised the CAO suggests the involved councillors try and resolve the issue between themselves or at the council table.

   Being neutral also means sharing information with all members of council. When decisions are being made by council, it is important all members have access to the same information. The job of the CAO is to ensure all council members have the information they need to make the best decisions for the community. As noted previously, regular updates from administration at council meetings can be beneficial to ensure everyone is privy to the same information.

6. Protocols for Ongoing Communication

   Protocols may be established to address the manner in which councillors bring issues they are concerned about to the attention of the CAO. The CAO may then have to determine whether the matter can be addressed by the administration or be dealt with by the whole council at a regular meeting, a special meeting or a closed meeting. While not all interactions between the council and the CAO should be formalized, it may be helpful to agree on some basic protocols in terms of keeping council members informed of issues between regular meetings and providing councillors the opportunity to bring concerns to the attention of administration.

7. Well-Defined Reporting Relationships

   Having clearly defined administrative policies, bylaws and an organizational chart that specifies the reporting relationship of municipal administration to the CAO and the CAO to council should help in terms of ongoing communication and in minimizing the potential for misunderstanding and conflict. If the appropriate reporting relationships appear to be creating difficulties, consideration should be given to having a working session involving the affected parties to develop acceptable protocols.

II.   Administrative Head

Organizational Leadership

Organizational leadership is a management approach that works towards what is best for individuals and what is best for a group simultaneously. In his or her capacity as head of the administration, the CAO is responsible for directing a team of department heads, supervisors, technicians and support staff in order to manage the affairs of the municipality and to deliver services. In smaller municipalities, the CAO may take on other roles or functions. The CAO leads the administration and is ultimately the individual accountable to council for the administration and how it performs. A CAO must play a strong leadership role, regardless of the size of the local government they are administering.

Leadership means fostering teamwork and a positive work environment among staff members, ensuring employees are able to take part in professional development training programs, ensuring staff have appropriate resources to work with, addressing issues that affect employees as they arise and making well-informed and fair decisions.

To strengthen these leadership skills, there are a number of courses that are offered through the Local Government Administration Association (LGAA), Society of Local Government Managers, as well as educational institutions.

Human Resource Management

Quality human resource management is essential to the successful operations of a municipality.

It is advised that the CAO implement strong policies and procedures to ensure consistency and equity are principles applied to all those who work, or apply to work, for the municipality. Policies and procedures should be in place for items such as staff recruitment, personnel, job descriptions, evaluations, and professional development.

For example, every facet of employment should be covered in the municipality's personnel policy. As well, each position in the municipality should have an appropriate job description that identifies the associated tasks of that position and sets out the expectations of the position.

In addition to a municipality's internal documents, it is advised that a CAO be familiar with Alberta's employment standards and ensure all municipal policies adhere to provincial and federal legislation. Information on employment standards can be found at: www.alberta.ca/employment-standards.aspx. Standards for Occupational Health and Safety matters can be found at www.work.alberta.ca/occupational-health-safety.html.

Records Management

An area that requires much attention is a municipality's records management and protection of information. A CAO is required to ensure all bylaws, minutes of council meetings and other official records and documents of the municipality are kept safe [S. 208].

For information about best practices for records management, please refer to Retention and Scheduling of Municipal Records.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act

The *FOIP Act* applies to public bodies in Alberta. Public bodies include all provincial government departments, agencies, boards and commissions. It also includes local public bodies such as municipalities, universities, school boards and others. The CAO for a public body is advised to understand this legislation and assist others with its application and use.

The protection of personal information is of the utmost importance. To acquire training on this legislation or access additional information, visit the FOIP website at www.servicealberta.ca/foip/.

Risk Management/Insurance

Most Alberta municipalities obtain comprehensive insurance coverage through one of two member-owned reciprocal insurance exchanges. Alberta Municipal Insurance Exchange is operated through the Alberta Municipal Services Corporation, which is available to members of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA). The Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) operates RMA Insurance.

These insurers are governed under The Insurance Act and may be able to provide coverage at lower rates than conventional insurance companies. The insurer is the best source of information on reducing risk and identifying areas to include in the municipality's municipal risk management policy. Insurers offer training and other resources to assist with risk identification, making claims, loss control and current trends in the insurance industry.

More and more municipalities are adopting risk management policies or strategies which seek to minimize the effects and liability risks for a municipality. This involves identifying potential hazards and implementing the appropriate measures to reduce or eliminate them in the community. Effective risk management also reduces the possibility that critical municipal infrastructure or systems will fail and leave the municipality unable to provide services to residents.

Other issues to consider are ensuring the municipality has the right insurance coverage with a view to budget considerations. Coverage should be reviewed regularly to ensure it is appropriate, current and cost-effective.

Information Technology

The information technology used by a municipality must support the protection of municipal documents and information. A municipality should have policies to address information technology priorities that could include: access, use, modification, inspections, replacement, etc. It is suggested that the CAO review current contracts and support agreements to better understand what is in place and whether these are in compliance with municipal policies.

III. Public Engagement

Liaison with the General Public

The CAO acts as the main liaison between council and the citizens of the municipality. He or she has a responsibility to meet with the general public on any matters that deal with bylaws, policies or procedures established by the council or programs and activities involving the community. In his or her role as CAO, meeting and dealing with the public could be an everyday occurrence. This could include having to meet with a citizen who may or may not approve of a recent decision of council. It is important the CAO listen to the citizen's concerns, and provide the relevant information to clarify the situation.

It is not the CAO's mandate to debate the outcome of the council decision; it is the CAO's duty to carry out council policies or directives. If one or more members of the public are dissatisfied

after meeting with the CAO and wish to further query a council decision, the mayor and council should be briefed, so other alternatives can be explored. This includes arranging for the citizen to attend a council meeting as a delegation, per the municipality's procedure bylaw.

Public Access to Information

Public access to local government information is clearly defined in the *MGA* and the *FOIP Act*. The general rule to follow is documents approved or adopted in a public meeting of council should be open for inspection or examination by the public, (e.g. bylaws, contracts for services, policy statements, agreements for rezoning or subdivisions). Documents/information should only be excluded from the public if they fall within the exceptions in Division 1 Part 2 of the *FOIP Act* for closed meetings.

According to legislation, the following are considered public documents:

• adopted minutes of regular and special council meetings;

• audited financial statements;

• budget adopted by a municipality;

• copies of all bylaws of the municipality; and

• assessment roll.

However, a municipality may choose to have additional documents available as well, which could be identified by policy or in their procedural bylaw. For example, it is considered best practice to post the agenda of an upcoming council meeting on the municipal website or have copies available for the public.

For frequently asked questions regarding how FOIP affects municipalities, please visit www.servicealberta.ca/foip/documents/faq-municipalities.pdf.

Delegations

In local government, a citizen has the right to be heard by council at a regular session of council. Citizen delegations can be a valuable means of ensuring that council remains accountable to the voting public. When citizens are engaged in a community issue, it can significantly influence policy and decision-making of council. Citizen groups can be helpful in providing alternatives and solutions to matters of concern to the community.

The procedure bylaw should include rules or guidelines that outline how a citizen or citizen delegation can appear before a council committee or regular meeting of council. For example, it could specify the length of time that a delegation is provided at a meeting. Or the bylaw could include a requirement to provide administration with background materials on the issue to be presented to council a certain number of days before the meeting. The citizen's input and

participation is very important in assisting council with determining direction of development and long term vision for the community. Public consultation can lead to mutually acceptable solutions and promotes a sense of engagement within a community.

Transparency and Accountability

The *MGA* includes provisions related to the transparency and accountability of council and its local boards and committees. This includes the conduct of meetings and the public's right to attend [S. 198]. Transparent decision making processes are seen as part of the foundation of good governance of a municipality.

A key transparency rule for municipalities is the requirement that all municipal meetings be open to the public, with the exception that portions of the meeting can be closed to the public for a limited number of reasons as provided for in the *FOIP Act.*

Municipalities must also follow the requirements when a bylaw, resolution, meeting, public hearing or something else is required to be advertised to the public [S. 606]. For example, if a municipality proposes a resolution to transfer or grant an estate or interest in land for less than market value, the proposal must be advertised [S. 70]. Further, council must hold a public hearing to obtain public input on matters that have a significant impact on the citizens and property owners in the municipality. For example, a land-use bylaw or a bylaw amending the land-use bylaw requires a public hearing [S. 639]. Appendix 1 of Basic Principles of Bylaws outlines the sections of the *MGA* that require a public hearing and/or advertising.

Additionally, council can seek public input or hold a "town hall" meeting on any other matter it chooses, even when public participation is not required by legislation. A public meeting may be a good idea when council is considering major changes that have a direct impact on citizens; for example, a new way of delivering a municipal service or to gauge public interest in a new capital project such as a recreation centre.

Petitions

The electors of a municipality may petition the locally elected council for a new bylaw or a bylaw to amend or repeal an existing bylaw or resolution on any matter within the jurisdiction of the council under the *MGA* or any other enactment, subject to some limitations. Locally elected councils may also be petitioned to hold a public meeting [S. 229], for a public vote on an advertised bylaw or resolution [S. 231], or for local improvements [S. 393].

The CAO of the municipality is responsible for determining the sufficiency of the petition in accordance with Section 225 of the *MGA* within 45 days of when the petition was filed [S. 226(1)].

For more information on petitions, please see the document entitled Petition to Your Council.

Public Participation Policy

Every council of a municipality must now establish a public participation policy [S.216.1], which serves to recognize the important role that the public plays in the decision-making process. Public input during decisions is valuable to a municipality because it leads to greater satisfaction and better relationships with citizens, reduces complaints and concerns that arise late in the process, and leads to better solutions.

For additional information on public engagement, please see the Public Participation Policies and Public Notification: A Guide for Municipalities and Public Input Toolkit for Municipalities.

IV.   Financial Management

Management, planning and protection of financial resources is one of, if not the most, important responsibility of the CAO position. It is critical to maintain current and accurate financial records and to ensure that legislative requirements are met. A number of key requirements are detailed below.

Budget (Sections 242 to 246)

The budget is the most important policy decision that council makes each year. The budget determines the programs and services that the municipality will provide to the residents.

Council must adopt a budget for each calendar year. The *MGA* provides that the budget may be prepared with both an operating and capital component, or using an annual budget based on the format of the annual financial statements. The legislation requires estimated annual revenues be sufficient to cover estimated expenditures.

Many municipalities pass an interim budget by December 31 of the preceding year and adopt the finalized annual budget in the early part of the following year. A municipality may only make an expenditure that is included in the budget, for an emergency, legally required or is otherwise authorized by council.

Financial Statements and Audit (Sections 276 to 283)

The financial statements of a municipality provide a picture about its use of the financial resources and information about its financial health.

The annual audited financial statements for the preceding year should be made available to the public by May 1 of the following year. A signed copy of the financial statements and the financial information return must also be submitted to the Minister of Municipal Affairs by May 1.

The Municipal Affairs webpage includes detailed information on reporting requirements, including specimen statements and a quick guide to assist with reading and interpreting the statements. Please visit www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/financial-reporting-requirements .

Council must appoint one or more independent auditors for the municipality who holds a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) designation to complete the annual audit of the financial statements.

Financial and Capital Plans (Section 283.1)

A new requirement in the *MGA* provides that municipalities must adopt, at a minimum, written three-year financial and five-year capital plans, beginning with the 2020 calendar year. The plans do not include the year the plan is prepared; consequently, work should be started on this requirement in late 2018 or early 2019 at the latest. Council must review and update the plans annually.

An Municipal Corporate Planning Guide is available with more details on the financial and capital plan provisions.

Investments (Section 250)

Every municipality should have an investment policy approved by council. Section 250 and the Investment Regulation detail the types of investment vehicles that a municipality may consider.

Borrowing and Debt Limits (Section 252)

Borrowing may only be done by bylaw and the bylaw must be passed prior to the commencement of any project that will be financed. Most borrowing bylaws must be advertised and are therefore subject to petition.

Debt and debt service limits are established under the Debt Limit Regulation. A municipality may borrow up to the limits. Borrowing in excess of one or both of the limits requires approval from the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Sample bylaws, loan calculator and debt limit worksheets can be found on the Alberta Capital Finance Authority website at www.acfa.gov.ab.ca.

Other Financial Matters (Section 268, 270)

Municipalities have multiple sources of revenue including property taxes, fees and charges for programs and services, utility rates and grants from other levels of government. All revenues received must be receipted and deposited into a financial institution as directed by council. Expenses must be accurately recorded in the accounting records.

Council should provide direction to the CAO regarding the frequency of financial updates.

Grants

The link to the grant portal is available at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/municipal-grants-web-portal.

V.   Planning and Development

The central authority for municipal planning, subdivision and development control is established in Part 17 of the *MGA*. The purpose of this part is set out in Section 617 of the *MGA*. To summarize, municipalities may adopt plans and land-use bylaws and make planning decisions to achieve an orderly development, improvement of the physical environment that results in beneficial use of land. All this is accomplished without infringing on the rights of individuals except to the extent necessary for the greater public interest. In addition, the Subdivision and Development Regulation (AR 43/2002), authorized by Section 694(1) of the *MGA* provides for the administration of subdivision and development applications, subdivision and development conditions, registration and endorsements of subdivision and setbacks for provincial appeals.

Statutory plans [S. 631- 638] serve as planning tools explicitly provided for and defined by the *MGA*. Statutory Plans can be mandatory or discretionary. It allows municipal councils to establish general development policies for all or part of the municipality. Legislation provides for four types of statutory plans:

1. **Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP)** [S. 631]: Unless part of a growth region, all municipalities that have a common boundary must now adopt an IDP, in respect of land to achieve consensus on use and development in the IDP area. IDPs must be completed by April 2020 and must form part of the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework between municipalities.

2. **Municipal Development Plan (MDP)** [S. 632]: An MDP establishes policies for land use in the entire municipality. All municipalities must, by bylaw, adopt an MDP by April 1, 2021, no matter their population. An MDP is a broad, long range planning tool that serves primarily to provide an interpretive guideline for future development in the municipality.

3. **Area Structure Plan** [S. 633]: Municipalities may adopt area structure plans to establish the general land use, transportation, and servicing framework for specific areas undergoing substantial new development.

4. **Area Redevelopment Plan** [S. 633]: Municipalities may adopt area redevelopment plans to outline proposals for addressing planning issues when rejuvenating existing developed areas.

Municipalities have at their disposal other non-statutory plans to help facilitate an orderly development and improvement of a municipality.

The land-use bylaw [S. 639 – 640] is the means of regulating the use and development of parcels of land. The *MGA* defines development as an excavation or stockpile, construction, renovation or repairs to a building, a change in the use of land or intensity in the use of land. All municipalities are required to adopt a land-use bylaw. The bylaw divides the municipality into districts, prescribing permitted and/or discretionary uses for each district. The bylaw establishes development standards within each district and provides for a system for issuing development permits.

Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks (ICFs)

All municipalities must adopt ICFs with each municipality with which they share a common border. These must be adopted by April 1, 2020, [S. 708.28]. The frameworks must align with the requirements outlined in the *MGA* and the Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Regulation. ICFs need to address how servicing will support development, as well as regional service delivery and funding. An ICF is not complete unless municipalities have also adopted an IDP. The Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework Workbook provides tools and information-based resources to inform municipal processes, decision making and implementation related to ICFs. An ICF implementation fact sheet is also available here.

Subdivision Authority

The *MGA* requires all municipalities to establish a subdivision authority [S. 623] to exercise the subdivision powers and duties on behalf of the municipality. The subdivision authority is responsible for receiving, processing, and deciding on subdivision applications. A subdivision authority may include any or all members of council, a designated officer, a municipal planning commission, or any other person or organization.

Development Authority

The *MGA* requires all municipalities to establish a development authority [S. 624] to exercise the development powers and duties on behalf of the municipality. The development authority is responsible for receiving, processing, and deciding on development permit applications. A development authority may include one or more of: a designated officer, a municipal planning commission, or any other person or organization. Most municipalities assign decision making and administrative responsibilities to staff. In many municipalities, decisions involving discretionary authority are referred to a municipal planning commission [S. 626].

Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB)

Municipalities are required to establish an SDAB [S. 627 - 630, 678 – 688] to hear appeals on the decisions of the subdivision or development authority. Municipal employees, persons who carry out subdivision or development duties or who are members of the municipal planning commission, may not be appointed to the appeal board. Starting on January 1, 2018, a panel hearing an appeal must not have more than one councillor as a member [S. 627(3)]. Within one year following the approval of a training curriculum by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, appeal board members and clerks must undergo mandatory training [S. 627.2]. More information on new requirements for SDABs can be found on the SDAB Training Requirements Implementation Fact Sheet and the Impartiality of Appeal Boards Implementation Fact Sheet.

Further information regarding Planning and Development is located at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/am_planning_and_development.

VI. Assessment and Taxation

The CAO of a municipality must ensure that assessments, assessment rolls and tax rolls for each property in the municipality, except designated industrial property and the property listed in Section 298, are prepared annually. [S. 285]. Property assessment is the process of assigning a dollar value to a property for taxation purposes. In Alberta, property is taxed according to value. This means that the amount of tax paid is based on the value of the property.

Each municipality is responsible for ensuring that each property owner pays his or her share of taxes. Property assessment is the method used to distribute the tax burden among property owners in a municipality.

Property taxes are a primary source of revenue for municipalities. Property taxes are used to finance local programs and services, such as:

- road construction and maintenance;

- parks and leisure facilities; and

- police and fire protection.

Often the terms assessment and taxation are considered to be interchangeable. However, assessment and taxation are very different. Although one impacts the other, each is a distinct and independent process.

Assessment is the process of estimating a dollar value on a property for taxation purposes. This value is used to calculate the amount of taxes that will be charged to the owner of the property. Taxation is the process of applying a tax rate to a property's assessed value to determine the taxes payable by the owner of that property.

Each year, municipal councils determine the amount of money they need to operate their municipality. From this amount, the council then subtracts known revenues (for example, licences, grants, and permits). The remainder is the amount of money the municipality needs to raise through property taxes to provide services for the year.

This revenue requirement is then used to calculate the tax rate. The tax rate is the percentage of assessed value at which each property is taxed in a municipality. The revenue requirement is divided by the assessment base (the total value of all assessed properties in the municipality).

The tax rate calculation is expressed in the following formula:

Revenue requirement/Assessment base = Tax rate

The tax rate is applied to each individual property assessment using the following formula:

Property assessment x Tax rate = Taxes payable

This formula means that the assessed value of the property in dollars is multiplied by the tax rate set by the municipality. The result is the amount of taxes to be paid for each assessed property.

A municipality may adjust its tax rate on a yearly basis depending on its revenue requirement. The tax rate a municipality chooses to set depends on the assessment base in the municipality and the amount of money it needs to generate using the property tax.

If the council requires more revenue to run the municipality and the assessment base in the municipality has remained the same, the council will have to increase its tax rate to generate the additional revenue.

If the assessment base in a municipality increases, and the tax rate remains the same, more tax dollars will be collected compared to the previous year. To collect the same amount of revenue, council would reduce its tax rate to reflect the increased assessment base.

A sample property tax bylaw is available at www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/documents/ms/Tax_Rate_Bylaw_Template_-_Blank.doc. For more in depth information regarding assessment and taxation, please see the Guide to Property Assessment and Taxation in Alberta.

Property Tax Recovery

The tax recovery process is a mandatory process through which a municipality maintains its fiscal health. Similarly, it is important to recognize that the purpose of the tax recovery process is to provide a means through which the municipality receives the taxes to which it is entitled. As such, a CAO must ensure that the tax recovery process and public auctions held to recover taxes are carried out in accordance with Part 10 of the *MGA*.

For more information on the tax recovery process, please see the document entitled A Guide to Tax Recovery in Alberta.

VII. Public Services

In Alberta Municipalities, it is the role of municipal employees under the direction of the CAO to ensure delivery of a variety of services to their citizens and community, however not every municipality provides the same services. .

The list of services provided below is not exclusive. Depending on the size, structure, and the financial resources of the community, other services may be available or services may be offered through partnerships or agreements. Municipalities must now develop ICFs with neighbouring municipalities that address at minimum: transportation, water and wastewater, solid waste, emergency services, and recreation [S.708.29]. These frameworks must be in place by April 2020 or a mandatory arbitration process will be initiated. An ICF implementation fact sheet, which provides guidance on establishing these frameworks, is available here.

Fire Protection

A council may establish, operate and maintain a fire department in order to offer fire protection inside and outside the municipal boundaries. Firefighters may be volunteer or paid employees. Fire protection may include: firefighting, fire prevention, and responding to emergencies. The Office of the Fire Commissioner provides technical advisory services to Alberta communities and organizations that deliver fire and emergency response and prevention services for citizens. If a municipality does not directly provide fire protection services, a regional agreement or fee-for-service may be established with neighbouring municipalities.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Alberta's municipalities are responsible for preparing and approving emergency plans and programs. When an emergency exceeds the capabilities of a municipality or there is a significant threat to life and property, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) coordinates the Government of Alberta's support to the municipality by linking them with resources to help it manage the emergency.

The province maintains emergency management programs for specific hazards and risks, and delivers emergency services that complement programs implemented by communities.

The AEMA leads the coordination, collaboration and co-operation of all organizations involved in the prevention, preparedness and response to disasters and emergencies. This ensures the delivery of vital services during a crisis. These organizations include government, industry, municipalities and first responders.

The AEMA website is located at www.aema.alberta.ca/index.

Streets, Roads and Sidewalks

Municipalities offer transportation infrastructure, including municipal trails, sidewalks, and roads. Municipalities are responsible for maintaining their infrastructure, including maintaining asphalt, repairing sidewalks, painting crosswalks, installing traffic signs, and cleaning streets.

Snow Removal

Snow removal is an essential service that municipalities provide to their citizens. Snow plowing operations involve the removal of snow and ice from streets to provide for the passage of vehicles and citizens in a safe manner. During snow plowing operations, it is the primary function of the operation to keep primary and secondary streets open to the public and provide access to priority streets. At all times, emergency vehicle passage is a high priority.

Water Supply

Municipalities own, or have water supplied to them, through various types of drinking water systems. The provincial government, through Alberta Environment and Parks, regulates these systems to ensure water safety and quality. Standards and guidelines for municipal waterworks is available at http://aep.alberta.ca/water/programs-and-services/drinking-water/legislation/standards-and-guidelines.aspx.

Sewage Collection and Disposal

Municipal wastewater contains sanitary sewage and is sometimes combined with stormwater from rain or melting snow draining off rooftops, lawns, parking lots and roads. The sewer system either takes the wastewater to a municipal wastewater treatment plant or releases it directly into a lake or river.

Alberta Environment and Parks (EP) regulates the Municipal Wastewater and Storm Water Management Program to ensure environmental protection. Regulatory frameworks, standards and guidelines are designed to assure environmentally acceptable wastewater discharge and acceptable storm water management practices. Municipal systems are regulated by EP and private sewage systems are regulated by Municipal Affairs. More information is available at http://aep.alberta.ca/water/programs-and-services/municipal-wastewater-and-storm-water-management-program/default.aspx.

Solid Waste Collection and Disposal/Waste Management

A council may provide solid waste collection and disposal services. Many municipalities provide regular garbage collection for their residents. Other services may include: bulk garbage collection, access to landfill sites, and collection of recyclables.

Recreation and Cultural Programs

Municipalities can enhance the quality of life of their citizens by providing a diverse range of recreation and leisure activities. Councils offer a wide range of programs including, but not limited to: fitness programs, senior programs, youth programs, children's programs, and family and community support services. Municipalities often operate recreation facilities such as swimming pools, arenas, outdoor sports facilities (soccer and softball fields), walking trails, and skate parks.

Shared Services

Regional cooperation is increasing in importance as communities aim to provide services by working with neighbouring communities. Whatever the reasons are for sharing services the benefits are the same - a supportive and thriving community. Examples of shared services include transportation, water and wastewater, solid waste, emergency services, recreation, and any other services that benefit residents in more than one municipality.

Resources and Supports

The role of the CAO is a challenging one. Although the roles, rules, issues and challenges this guide touches on are substantial, always remember that assistance is available for any problems that may be encountered. The following contact list should help in deciding where to turn when questions arise.

Some of the most popular links for CAOs are below:

Alberta Emergency Alert

An emergency or disaster can occur anytime, anywhere. Some allow time to prepare; others occur swiftly and with little or no warning. Albertans have faced several unexpected disasters in the recent past. These events remind us that this province is not immune to tragedy -- that's why Alberta has a broadcast warning system used to warn the public of a life threatening emergency or disaster.

Alberta's Peer Network

The Peer Network for Dispute Resolution is a partnership that has created a group of peer mentors who municipal leaders can contact to obtain advice and/or assistance to help address local issues. Partnering organizations, including the RMA, the AUMA, the LGAA, and ARMAA, each have two mentors representing their association. Other partners that help guide the program include Alberta Municipal Affairs, the Society of Local Government Managers, and the Alberta Arbitration and Mediation Society.

Alberta Rural Municipal Administrators' Association

The Alberta Rural Municipal Administrators Association is a fraternal organization which brings together the senior administrative staff of Alberta's rural municipalities for the purpose of improving the professional service delivery to all Albertans.

Alberta Urban Municipalities Association

The AUMA is an association of the urban municipalities in Alberta. It provides leadership in advocating local government interests to the provincial government and other organizations, and provides services that address the needs of its membership.

Elected Officials Education Program (EOEP)

The EOEP is jointly owned and operated by the RMA and the AUMA. The EOEP offers Munis 101: The Essentials of Municipal Governance, an overarching course designed to provide both new and returning councillors with the skills and knowledge they need to excel in their positions moving forward. It also offers five additional supplementary courses that will allow participants to delve into the details of topics such as public participation, regional partnerships, land-use and development approvals, and others.

[Federation of Canadian Municipalities](#)

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities is the national voice of municipal government representing 90 per cent of Canada's municipal population. It actively advocates to have the needs of municipalities and their citizens reflected in federal policies and programs.

[Fire Commissioner's Office](#)

The Fire Commissioner's Office promotes all aspects of fire protection to reduce deaths, injuries and property losses due to fire in Alberta. The three main program areas are advisory services, fire statistics and public fire safety education/information programs.

[Government Finance Officers Association](#)

The Government Finance Officers Association Alberta Chapter has over 1,000 members and serves a pivotal role in ensuring the financial wellbeing of local governments in our province.

[Local Government Administration Association](#)

The LGAA is an organization whose membership is made up of municipal, administrative personnel. The purpose of the LGAA is to advance the interest of municipal employees through networking and to serve as spokesman for its members to the provincial government and liaise with other agencies and organizations in the area of municipal administration.

[Municipal Financial Return and Sample Financial Statements](#)

The *MGA* requires that every Alberta municipality prepare an annual financial information return and annual audited financial statements. Both must be submitted to Alberta Municipal Affairs by May 1 of each year.

The financial information return templates, including municipal and excluded functions (gas and electrical) and the accompanying manual are now available for downloading. The financial information return templates require Microsoft Excel Version 7 or newer to complete. If returning files to Municipal Affairs by email, the completed files must be saved in Microsoft Excel Version 7 format.

[Municipal Internship Program](#)

The Municipal Internship Program is a partnership between Alberta Municipal Affairs and Alberta municipalities and planning service agencies. The objective of the program is to encourage recent post-secondary graduates to consider a career in municipal administration, land-use planning or finance.

The program offers interns the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in a municipal organization for a 12-month (Administrator or Finance Officer) or 24-month (Land-Use Planner) period. Municipalities and planning service agencies are a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise, and interns are eager to learn from this experience and be supported as they establish themselves in the municipal field.

[Municipal Population Lists](#)

Official population lists for the Province of Alberta from 1913 to the most current.

[Municipal Capacity and Sustainability Branch](#)

The Municipal Capacity and Sustainability Branch facilitates responsive, accountable and transparent local government in Alberta communities by helping build municipal capacity, encouraging regional collaboration, carrying out strategic policy research and development, and by implementing the Government of Alberta's Municipal Sustainability Strategy.

The branch helps to build the capacity of municipalities through advisory support in areas such as governance, finance and land-use planning, the provision of training and internship programs, and other tools that help municipalities operate effectively.

Municipal co-operation is a significant priority, and is fostered through dispute resolution training and assistance, support for regional services commissions, and support for regional planning initiatives. The branch also facilitates processes involved in voluntary municipal restructuring, such as dissolution or amalgamation of municipalities. Municipal review and inspections are carried out at the request of councils or in response to electors' petitions.

[Rural Municipalities of Alberta](#)

The RMA is a progressive association of elected rural councils, representing the interests of rural Albertans, and committed to excellence in meeting the diverse and changing needs of its membership.

[Society of Local Government Managers](#)

The professional Society of Local Government Managers regulates the practices of local government managers and ensures its members act in the best public interest.