

And the list keeps growing... An overview of the AMM's survey of MUNICIPAL DOWNLOADS AND UNFUNDED MANDATES



By Tyler MacAfee, Director of Policy and Communications

Doesn't it seem like at every council meeting the agenda is getting longer and longer? Municipalities seem to be getting involved in more and more areas, either as a result of other orders of government not meeting their responsibilities or new municipal responsibilities being set out by the Province. These increasing expectations make it harder and harder for municipal government to deliver core services and tackle core challenges.

At AMM we are increasingly hearing these concerns from you. To try to get a better handle on the scope of this the AMM asked all municipalities to let us know:

- In what areas is your municipality involved today that are really provincial responsibilities?
- What additional responsibilities has your municipality been mandated to take on that did not previously exist.

DOWNLOAD OR UNFUNDED MANDATE?

While the end result is the same, there is a distinction to make between a download and an unfunded mandate. A download is when one order of government abdicates its responsibility and leaves another to provide the service or take on that responsibility. This may be done intentionally or unintentionally, but either way the end result is the same. An

SURVEY'S TOP 5 ISSUES:

- Health Care Professional Recruitment – 53%
- Provincial Roads – 45%
- Water Plant Engineering Assessments – 42%
- PSAB – 40%
- Drainage – 36%

unfunded mandate is when an order of government creates new rules for another order of government yet there is no corresponding financial support.

While the distinction between the two is necessary, the end result remains the same – more for you to do as elected municipal officials.

RESULTS OF SURVEY

There is no doubt from the replies to the questions that municipalities are facing nearly insurmountable challenges. From 85 municipalities responding to our survey, a total of 61 different areas were raised spanning every Provincial department.

What was evident from the survey is municipal governments are exceeding their anticipated responsibilities. While *The Municipal Act* talks about spheres of jurisdiction rather than defined responsibilities, the survey reveals municipalities are working in areas well beyond the most liberal application of the Act. Not only are municipalities recruiting doctors from overseas, but they are also being asked to help residents complete applications for provincial rebates and services, cost-sharing upgrades to Provincial highways and helping pay for hospitals.

The reality is as the order of government closest to the people, municipalities are being asked to fill the void left when other orders of government don't meet their mandates. A community needs a doctor, so municipalities are forced to step in and help finance recruitment efforts. Residents need help with forms, so they go to their local municipal office to help them out. The survey also shows municipalities are quick to step in when it is needed, but too often there is no accompanying financial support.

NEXT STEP

As you saw at the recent convention, the list of municipal concerns is growing. The AMM will be incorporating the information gained in the survey into our lobbying in the coming year. We have already had the opportunity to raise many of these concerns with the government in the past and will now use this new information to reinvigorate our lobbying position. We have also raised concerns with downloading and unfunded mandates with the Premier and Cabinet at our annual meeting during the Convention and will continue to do so throughout the year during our one-on-one meetings.

The AMM would like to thank all those municipalities that responded to the survey and we will continue to bring your issues forward to government. 

