

TO: Mayors/Wardens, Councillors, All Units

CC: Chief Administrative Officers/Clerk-Treasurers, All Units

FR: Councillor Geoff Stewart, President, UNSM

RE: REQUEST FOR COUNCIL FEEDBACK ON UNSM PRIORITIES FOR 2018

Dear Mayors, Wardens and Councils,

UNSM continues to evolve its process of developing a collective voice for municipal priorities and concerns, and is seeking Council feedback on the most important matters you would like UNSM to address in its advocacy work and in its workplan.

Over the last few years, UNSM has been working to improve its effectiveness in its advocacy work and member engagement. For example, revisions to the resolutions process were made in order to develop a clearer focus on the most important matters for municipalities across the province. Last year's resolutions resulted from a broad consultation effort with municipalities and a process to choose the top ones to be forwarded to the province.

Comments received during and after last year's resolution process suggested Councils should be involved, not just individual members. The link between resolutions and UNSM priorities was also noted as perhaps not being as strong as it could be.

The five top resolutions from 2017 certainly represent significant issues for municipalities, and will not likely be resolved in the short run. Municipal funding, the CAP, physician recruitment, internet connectivity and roads will see progress in the next few months, and will need to be reassessed in the fall. Knowledge gained over the next few months may suggest revisions or refinements to the actions being taken in support of these priorities.

In addition to these areas, UNSM is working on a number of other files. The Board has identified ten as being of significant importance, and would like councils to identify which of these matter the most to Councils. The results will help UNSM focus its advocacy efforts and workplan. Please note we have not included the current 5 resolution topics, as they are already a priority.

In order to consolidate the responses in time for the Spring Workshop, Councils are asked to provide feedback on your top priorities by April 30th, 2018.

Please see below the suggested priorities for your consideration. Please discuss and provide your top issues to UNSM with an explanation of why it is important to your Council, how it impacts your community, and suggestions as to how you would like to see it addressed. Feedback is requested by April 30, 2018.

Potential Priorities

1. Age friendly places/seniors: as our community demographics lean towards more seniors, municipal supports may include planning, community transit, socialization

through recreation or other initiatives, safety support, etc. A number of initiatives are underway in many communities, best practices could be better shared, and innovative solutions developed.

2. Cannabis legalization: while impending provincial legislation will determine the framework for the municipal role in legalization, it will take time and resources to understand the implications for municipalities.
3. Code of conduct: a workshop planned for April will assist in identifying possible changes to the MGA to add authorities for actions in response to breeches in a code of conduct, there will be work required to develop appropriate legislation, resources and tools to assist councils in ensuring the code is sustained.
4. Economic development: The REN model is developing across most of the province, but there remains major challenges in our economic viability. There is work to be done to better support the RENS and to identify further tools to facilitate economic growth.
5. Housing: The availability of affordable and quality housing is a concern throughout the province. In some areas, the lack of housing is impacting negatively on economic development. In some areas suitable housing may be available, but the location, without adequate public or community transit, is not helpful.
6. Immigration: population in the province is aging and decreasing. Studies are showing economic growth in the province will be limited without more immigration. The factors impacting the ability of communities to attract and retain immigrants needs to be understood and enhanced.
7. Municipal modernization and municipal government act revisions: The Fiscal Review Report identified the need to create a new way for municipalities to deliver local services. Through the review of the Municipal Government Act, it became clear municipalities need to be enabled to do more. Amalgamations and annexations are allowed in the MGA, but have expressed the need for alternative ways of working together. The status quo will not serve our citizens well, we need to be creative and open to finding new ways forward. This is about creating a new approach to meeting the needs of our communities.
8. Minimum planning standards/regional planning: there are challenges in the ways communities and adapt to more frequent and extreme weather, housing and transportation demands, and economic opportunities, and in how we protect the environment and quality of life. Minimum planning standards and/or regional planning may be appropriate tools to better plan infrastructure and service delivery.
9. Solid waste system and extended producer responsibility: The cost of disposing of garbage has been increasing at a significant rate. A review of the solid waste system is just beginning, and recommendations on improving the system will be forthcoming. Extended Producer Responsibility, where those producing waste printed paper and packaging are made responsible for the disposal of the waste, is a tool used in more and more provinces.
10. Police services: even without the legalization of cannabis, the costs of policing have been increasing significantly and the trend is likely to continue. We need to find new ways of addressing these costs, respecting police services and addressing the social and economic conditions contributing to the costs of these services.



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