

Enabling Growth and Housing Affordability

The following submission was developed by ABmunis administration following the engagement series on Enabling Growth and Housing Affordability beginning in February 2025. As this series of engagement wraps up, we would like to provide a list of action items that would enable municipalities, developers and the province to collaborate in enabling timely and sustained growth and long-term affordability of our communities.

Recommended Action Items

1. Work with ABmunis and Other Associations to Strengthen Off-Site Levy Tools
 - Update the Off-Site Levies: A Municipality's Manual for Capital Cost Recovery Due to New Development to reflect recent tribunal rulings, best practices, and lessons learned and develop a companion tool specifically to help elected officials understand their role in OSLs.
 - Develop a standardized levy formula model that municipalities can adapt to their local context, providing both consistency and flexibility.
2. Improve the Development Appeal Process
 - Require appellants to provide a clear reason for appeal at the time of submission, reducing frivolous claims.
 - Explore the option to introduce a screening step, allowing the SDAB to dismiss vexatious appeals resulting in shortened timelines.
 - Require an appeal fee, refundable if the appeal is successful, to discourage abuse of the process.
 - Shorten the timeline for filing appeals to reduce unnecessary delays.
 - Provide additional guidance on SDAB governance, beyond mandatory training, to increase the capacity of smaller boards.
 - Clarify the division of jurisdiction between SDABs and the Land and Property Rights Tribunal.
3. Invest in Growth-Enabling Infrastructure
 - Increase provincial funding for critical infrastructure such as water and wastewater systems to ensure municipalities can support new development.

Avoid the risks associated with Automatic Yes.

The Ministerial Mandate Letter issued to the Minister of Municipal Affairs on September 22, 2025 calls for the development of an "Automatic Yes" permitting program that would impose shortened approval timelines on municipalities and automatically approve applications if they are not processed within the prescribed timeframe.

This approach was generally not supported by representatives of the development or municipal community during engagement sessions, as permits are generally approved in an acceptable timeframe. Delays in approval usually stem from incomplete applications and introducing an 'Automatic Yes' may have the unintended consequence of increasing the number of denied applications by forcing municipalities to deny incomplete applications rather than work with applicants to help them complete the process.

An 'Automatic Yes' approach may also work against Alberta's stated interest of providing "home ownership in safe, affordable, attractive, livable family friendly communities that reflect Alberta's distinct values and heritage" by forcing municipalities to choose between meeting deadlines and ensuring development supports the goal of building safe, affordable, attractive, livable family friendly communities.