

Member Webinars: What We Heard



February 2026

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Purpose and Context

On February 5th and 6th, 2026, Alberta Municipalities (ABmunis) hosted three member-webinars to facilitate conversations about current priorities. The goal was to hear members' questions, feedback, stories, or ideas. The webinars were intended to ensure members felt informed about advocacy priorities and engaged by having a forum to provide candid feedback.

The webinar format

Each webinar focused on ABmunis current advocacy priorities. After the moderator presented each priority, members were asked for their thoughts, feedback, stories, and concerns. Members were encouraged to share their reflections. Administration captured the questions and feedback shared by taking notes and creating a transcript of the webinars. Participants were told that ABmunis will not publish recordings of the webinars, giving them the freedom to be honest and candid.

Participation

The webinars were organized by member segment and hosted by a Board Director from that same member segment with Board President Dylan Bressey bringing greetings.

Member Segment	Date & Time	# of ¹ ²	Moderator	Zone
Villages & Summer Villages	Thu, Feb 5, 12:00-1:15PM	59	Deputy Mayor Deborah Reid-Mickler	Director, Villages South
Towns	Fri, Feb 6, 9:00-10:15 AM	66	Mayor Krista Gardner	Director, Towns West
Cities	Fri, Feb 6, 11:00-12:15 PM	45	Councillor Erin Stevenson	Director, Cities up to 500,000

² Participants include the moderator, Board members, and administration providing support.

Key Themes

Federal Budget and Funding Infrastructure for Housing

ABmunis has been vocal in expressing concern that the latest federal budget provides insufficient support for municipalities and imposes restrictive conditions on the funding that it does include. In particular, the Build Communities Strong Fund (BCSF) ties access to dollars to reductions in development fees — a model that subsidizes industry in high-fee regions, but does not reflect Alberta’s context where off-site levies already support a successful growth and where the province leads the nation in housing starts. Under the current BCSF design, municipalities in Alberta would need to further reduce these levies to qualify for funding. The BCSF’s design effectively disincentivizes ABmunis’ members from participating in the program, which means Albertans will not receive their fair share of federal investments.

ABmunis is actively working with the provincial government and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to emphasize that the BCSF model is misaligned with Alberta’s needs and to call for genuine new investments rather than reallocations from existing municipal programs. Without net new funding, the municipal infrastructure deficit will continue to grow.

Municipal Approaches to Removing Barriers to Housing Development

Members were asked to share how they are approaching housing development. It became clear that Alberta municipalities, regardless of size, are already doing everything within their authority to facilitate housing development.

- Cities and towns spoke about **streamlining land use bylaws** to enable higher density, secondary suites, duplexes, and multifamily dwellings, reducing rezonings, and “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) risk. One city cut the number of land use planning districts — used in Alberta to guide residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional development within a municipality — to speed up approvals and reduce project risk. One town removed approximately 100 pages from their bylaw by simplifying the planning processes and eliminating contradictions. In villages and summer villages the focus is on keeping bylaws aligned with efficient permitting without excessive complexity.
- Municipalities are **cutting red tape**. Cities are shifting from “prior to release” to “prior to completion” conditions; reducing securities for proven developers; and using automation to turn routine permits around in minutes. Towns are streamlining reviews, especially for multifamily and infill, to keep momentum. Villages highlighted **ultrafast service standards** (e.g. 48-hour permits) to counter any arguments that local approval processes are the bottleneck.
- Members are **creating unique incentives** to spur development. Cities have started stacking local incentives with external programs to pull purpose-built rental and multifamily dwellings into priority areas.
- Towns have been creative in using property tax holidays/phasedowns for 3–5 years on new builds, and implementing renovation grants above set thresholds.
- Villages are using tax tools and development incentives to encourage private activity; the challenge becomes servicing and opening the next area once lots sell out.
- Across all municipal types, local governments are **using land strategically** — cities by dedicating non-market parcels and reserve funds; towns by discounting surplus land with safeguards against speculation; and villages by leveraging incentives until they hit the next major constraint: the high cost of servicing new land.
- Municipalities are **actively pursuing infrastructure solutions to unlock housing**, with cities and some towns using off-site levies, towns front-ending or developer-funding major road upgrades, and villages negotiating P3-style arrangements or seeking flexibility for developers to build critical utilities.
- Across all contexts, there is concern that federal funding rules requiring reduced levies are threatening the very infrastructure systems that enable growth.
- There was a strong shared message that **Alberta’s approvals are already fast** and that cutting off-site levies to access federal dollars does not fit our model.

Trends Across Member Segments

Theme	Cities	Towns	Villages & Summer Villages
Market capacity & developer interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High developer interest • Strong competition for multifamily & rental • Can deploy sophisticated incentives, policy tools, dedicated housing offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate interest • Can attract infill & greenfield • Use tax incentives, land sales, LUB reforms • NIMBYism is a notable hurdle • Some hit success but worry about build-out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often too small to attract private developers • Must incentivize heavily or partner with local industry • Some are running out of serviced land; fixed footprints + high servicing costs
Administrative capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated housing staff, planners, analysts • Can navigate federal programs & reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-level capacity • Can manage moderate reforms & some data work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very lean staff: many dev officers part-time • Complex federal applications/reporting often prohibitive
Land inventory & growth pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger land banks; can release parcels strategically • Emphasis on infill (e.g., 50/50 targets), Transit Oriented Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix of infill & greenfield • Commonly subdivide oversized historical lots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely limited serviced land; many fully built out • May require multimillion dollar infrastructure extensions to open even a few lots
Political dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood level NIMBY pushback around infill/density level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong neighbourhood pushback to infill, secondary suites, height 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to change beyond existing patterns • Environmental/lake impact concerns add complexity

FCSS & Prevention

Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) are a vital part of Alberta’s communities, helping residents address social and health challenges early through prevention-focused programming. Provincial funding has remained flat at around \$100 million since 2015, even as Alberta’s population has grown by nearly one million and inflation has averaged 2.25% annually. When adjusted for these pressures, FCSS funding should be approximately \$162 million, which is why ABmunis, alongside FCSSAA and RMA, is calling on the province to increase its investment.

Over the same period of stagnant provincial funding, municipalities have nearly doubled their own contributions, investing \$245 million in 2024 and often exceeding their required 20% share. With clear evidence that every dollar spent on prevention reduces costs in emergency services, policing, and health care, now is the time for the province to step up. ABmunis is asking members to support this advocacy heading into Budget 2026 using the newly released [FCSS advocacy toolkit](#) to help with MLA meetings, media engagement, and community outreach.

Member Perspectives on FCSS

- There was broad support for ABmunis to push to increase provincial funding to \$162 million annually and a recognition that FCSS funding has not kept pace with growth and inflation which is impacting their communities.
- Leaders consistently framed prevention as the **cheapest and most effective intervention** available to municipalities.
- FCSS provides **essential community glue**. Regardless of community size, FCSS roles include youth supports, seniors outreach and transportation, mental health and family supports, volunteer coordination, food security and referrals.
- Municipalities view FCSS as foundational, low-cost, high-impact programming.
- All municipalities value FCSS because it **allows communities to design programming that reflects local needs**. This flexibility was consistently named as essential to delivering effective prevention.
- There were unique and creative approaches to regional FCSS services and collaboration leading to smaller communities accessing larger municipalities health services.
- Across all municipal types, FCSS is essential, however it continues to be underfunded and overextended. But the impact of underfunding varies by scale:
 - Cities: Cannot meet the scale of social need; the nonprofit sector is strained.
 - Towns: Struggling to maintain diverse programming with growing populations.
 - Villages: Facing structural impossibility – they must deliver prevention with almost no funding, no staff, and no alternative providers.

Underfunded FCSS Impacts by Member Segment

Municipality Type	What FCSS Must Do	Main Challenge
Cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stabilize large nonprofit sectors; address complex, urban social needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underfunded relative to scale/complexity
Towns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver diverse programs; coordinate regionally; support fast-growing varied populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing needs + moderate administrative capacity
Villages & Summer Villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as the entire social services system for isolated residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely low funding + no local alternatives

Police Funding Model

The new provincial Police Funding Model (PFM), released late last year for municipalities under 5,000, has raised significant concerns among ABmunis members. Our key message is that the model adds financial pressure at a time when municipalities are already grappling with rising costs, limited revenue tools, and tight budgets. Equally important, the principle of “say with pay” remains unaddressed – municipalities are being asked to contribute more without the corresponding input or oversight needed to ensure these investments enhance community safety. While we await detailed cost information from the province, our early analysis suggests the new allocation formula may shift costs from municipal districts and counties onto smaller urban municipalities.

Policing Costs Impact on Members

- For towns and villages under 5,000, there was **strong and widespread concern** about the province’s new Police Funding Model (PFM).
- There was near-universal concern that the **PFM shifts significant new costs onto small municipalities** without corresponding authority, explanation, or service improvements.
- Participants stated that the **sharp year-over year increases are large, rapid, and hard to absorb**. Municipalities emphasized that budgets were already set when the PFM was announced and their estimates shared, small tax bases make even “modest” dollar increases significant on a per-capita basis.
- There was widespread frustration about municipalities having to pay more, but having little control over staffing levels, local policing priorities, and receiving limited information on how costs are calculated or spent.
- Participants stressed that they are **not opposed to contributing** to policing. The issue is **paying without authority, oversight, or transparency**.
- Members raised repeated questions about:
 - How costs are calculated
 - What data is used
 - Why increases are assumed year over year
- There was a lack of clarity on:
 - What counts as an “occurrence”
 - Whether reporting minor incidents could increase future costs
 - Whether communities are being penalized for encouraging reporting
- This uncertainty creates fear of **perverse incentives**, such as discouraging residents from reporting minor crime.
- The wider context of increasing policing costs across the province, outside of the changes to the PFM was raised as well. For towns over 5,000 the policing costs can be even higher without the province offsetting those costs via the PFM.
- One example was provided where a town pays \$1.8 million per year for policing for a population of about 6,000 and their county which has a much larger geographic area to police and a larger overall municipal budget pays \$400K because they receive funding via the PFM.

Board Reflections

ABmunis Board members appreciated the opportunity to hear directly from members.

With the ongoing uncertainty around funding and downloading, I more than ever sensed a strong message from our municipalities: they want to be heard, and they are looking for direction.

The facilitator for both sessions I attended did an excellent job creating space for open dialogue and collaboration. As an organization, we are the nucleus for our municipalities, and this is the time for us to truly advocate on their behalf.

There are no borders or divisions in this work. We succeed only by working together, supporting one another, and speaking with a unified voice.

- Councillor David Sharun, ABmunis Director of Towns East

I appreciated the conversation and specific examples that participants in the cities webinar shared about how they're dealing with each of the topics we discussed in a solutions-oriented manner. While we all may be facing similar challenges, we recognize that sharing the solutions a community may have is part of creating success for all municipalities throughout this province.

- Councillor Jenn Schmidt-Rempel, ABmunis Director of Cities up to 500,000

I appreciated hearing from members on these priority topics, for example, the SV of West Cove shared they are using FCSS funds for seniors' programs to get them out of the house. I thought this was a good idea others can borrow from.

For the discussion on the PFM, I heard "we want say with pay". This is a comment that came up in the last Board meeting. The municipalities are expected to cover the police cost, but we have no say in what the costs will be.

- Mayor Brian Waterhouse, ABmunis Director of Summer Villages

Next Steps

- ABmunis will share the information shared and feedback received at the webinars with members.
- ABmunis staff & Board will determine the frequency of future webinars.
- Feedback shared will be incorporated into future advocacy.



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