



COVID-19



REGIONAL CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY – ROUND FOUR

MNL's 4th round of regional calls took place between May 20 and 22. These calls focused on municipal alert level readiness. MNL CEO Craig Pollett chaired all 6 calls. He provided an update to members on MNL actions and activities concerned COVID-19 since the last series of calls. Between Round 3 and Round 4 calls, MNL:

- Facilitated a meeting between MNL, FCM President Bill Karsten and Minister Bragg regarding the FCM call for municipal emergency funding (May 1)
- Hosted a meeting with members of the federal NL Liberal Caucus to discuss the FCM ask and the need for them to advocate for such funding (May 15)
- Held 2 meetings with Minister Haggie regarding the importance of the municipal voice at the table/and to discuss Alert level guidance for municipalities
- Hosted 4 calls with regional health boards
- Issued 3 surveys to members: one on PPE usage and needs; another on the Economic impacts of COVID-19; one covering leadership and impacts of COVID-19 on women (issued to the MNL Women's Caucus)

Preliminary analyses of our economic impacts survey indicate that:

- Municipalities are losing revenue as a result of COVID-19 but putting a number on those monthly losses is still difficult – a considerable amount of uncertainty remains;
- Municipalities are incurring additional costs as a result of COVID-19;
- Municipalities who report staff layoffs indicate that these have happened among casual/seasonal staff but also among permanent full-time staff;

The major concerns of municipalities included: tax collection; loss of revenue through major industry closures (I.e. fish plants) and tourism season impacts; payroll and municipal bill payments; revenue loss from lack of recreation facilities/programming; and safety.

In our first round of calls, we heard from many of our communities with potable water dispensing units (PWDUs) that they had concerns about usage and sanitization during the pandemic. After working with MAE, the Department issued materials to help with PWDU guidance. We are pleased to inform our members that we are working with researchers and students from Memorial University to do additional PWDU research. MNL staff will be reaching out to provide further information, and students from Memorial will be calling in coming weeks to ask PWDU-operating communities if you would like to participate. The purpose of the research is to share your experiences related to PWDUs during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in general.

ROUNDTABLE

Municipalities across the province shared updates and posed questions with for guidance and support as the province reopens and moves through the various alert levels. Several themes emerged across all calls. These themes are below.

- **Town offices:** Some municipalities' town offices are open to public by appointment only. Others are wondering when and if they should bring staff back to the office and whether and how they should open to the public.
- **Council meetings:** A few municipalities indicated that their councils met in person while following public health guidelines or intended to meet in person again soon. Most continued virtual meetings. Several municipalities noted the difficulty in carrying out virtual meetings in rural areas with unreliable or no access to broadband.
- **Staffing:** Municipalities indicated that they were in the process of hiring and/or bringing back summer staff.
- **People's mobility:** The "non-essential" movement of people between communities emerged as a topic of discussion on several calls. Out-of-province worker movement into Labrador was noted as a point for concern and continued monitoring. Updates were provided on the Labrador call to speak to this.
- **Summer students:** Municipalities rely upon summer student wage subsidy programming, and the hiring of summer students for programming and facilities. Municipalities expressed concern about whether federal emergency student aid would impact the labour pool; many noted that summer student funding from the Province had not yet been announced to municipalities who applied and wished to know if and to what extent altered job descriptions would be allowed.
- **Bulk garbage/garbage collection:** Garbage remained a topic across calls. Some municipalities held, or were about to hold, bulk garbage days. Others wondered whether bulk garbage pick-up was possible, and if not, what this meant for illegal dumping.
- **PPE:** Securing PPE continues to be a concern for members. Access varies.
- **Day camps and recreation guidance:** Municipalities are awaiting day camp guidance from the Province. Some decided that they will not offer day camps and others will make the decision once more information is available.
- **Sectoral concerns:** Members discussed the short and medium-term status of the tourism and fishing industries in the province.
- **Alert-level guidance:** Members are interested in receiving more guidance for the remaining alert levels.