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## **CIRCULAR TO MUNICIPALITIES AND LOCAL SERVICE DISTRICTS**

On March 27, 2020, the Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment issued a circular to all municipalities and Local Service Districts for the purpose of providing clarity on local government operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. As we continue to address concerns around COVID-19, it is imperative that we all follow the measures outlined by the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Department of Health and Community Services.

As indicated in our earlier circular, local governments operate under specific legislation, including the *Municipalities Act*, various Cities' Acts and the *Municipal Elections Act*. We would like to take this opportunity to provide further clarity on the issue of municipal council and LSD committee meetings.

Municipal legislation requires that local governments hold a minimum number of meetings and also requires that the public be able to attend these meetings. The Department had previously recommended that public council meetings be temporarily postponed, unless necessary for critical operations. Government has since reviewed legislative timelines and wishes to advise Cities, Towns and Local Service Districts there will be no change to the legislative obligation to hold a minimum number of public council meetings.

In so doing, we are recommending that local governments focus on critical operations and continue to minimize social contact and avoid larger gatherings of people, as per the direction of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Department of Health and Community Services.

In the interest of public health, we are asking local governments to make every effort to conduct their public meetings online or by phone.

Local Governments may conduct their public meetings through a live streaming, video conferencing or teleconferencing process, thereby avoiding physical attendance. Minutes must be completed for each public meeting. Examples of video conferencing include Facebook Live, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Webex and Go To Meeting. Local governments can also contact their respective service provider for teleconferencing access. Local governments may choose which process they use, provided the public is given an opportunity to call in to the meeting and to listen to the proceedings.

We would also encourage cities and towns to engage Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL). MNL is working with their partners to support cities and towns that want to engage in video and teleconferencing as well as live streaming of meetings. Reach out to MNL if you would like to learn more about the low cost options they've come up with. You can reach them at [covid19@municipalnl.ca](mailto:covid19@municipalnl.ca).

In line with its ongoing efforts to assist all local governments, MNL has partnered with TELUS Business to support those communities that need to setup video/teleconferencing, live meeting broadcasts, and cloud-based technology solutions for working remotely and securely from home. Many of these products and services include a 90-day free trial. Municipalities or Local Service Districts interested in pursuing one of these opportunities should reach out to MNL's Director of Programs, Bradley Power, at [bpower@municipalnl.ca](mailto:bpower@municipalnl.ca), or call 1-877-651-0275, extension 106.

The Department appreciates the important work of our councils and would like to extend our sincere gratitude for your continued support and dedication to your communities during this extremely difficult time. If you have any further questions please contact the appropriate Regional Manager as listed below.

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