

# Municipal Government Act Review

## What We Heard: A Summary of Consultation Input

Public Open House

Held in Fort McMurray on February 13, 2014

Released on June 24, 2014

Developed by KPMG for Alberta Municipal Affairs



## Contents

Introduction .....	1
Purpose .....	1
The Municipal Government Act Review .....	1
Session Overview .....	2
Regional Consultation Methodology .....	3
Summary of Input .....	5
Governance and Administration .....	5
Municipal Accountability, Liability, and Risk Management .....	5
Municipal Services and Delivery .....	5
Public Participation and Municipal Relations .....	6
Planning and Development .....	6
Regional Approaches .....	6

## Introduction

### Purpose

This document provides a summary of what was heard during a consultation session for the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) review. The summary below includes the comments and opinions of the participants of the Public Open House held in Fort McMurray.

These contributions have not been reviewed or edited for accuracy. Comments recorded here reflect the opinions of individuals offered in person and recorded by session facilitators; they do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Government of Alberta.

The input summarized below will be considered by Alberta Municipal Affairs as part of the review of the legislation. Municipal Affairs would like to thank the participants of this session, as well as all Albertans participating in the review of the MGA. Any inquiries related to this summary or to the consultation process should be directed by email to the MGA Review Team at [mga.review@gov.ab.ca](mailto:mga.review@gov.ab.ca).

### The Municipal Government Act Review

The MGA is designed to help build strong, prosperous and sustainable communities throughout Alberta. Alberta Municipal Affairs is reviewing and refreshing the MGA to address evolving circumstances and priorities in Alberta's many communities, and to ensure the MGA continues to meet its objective. A successful MGA review process will continue to position Alberta as the leading Canadian jurisdiction in terms of municipal legislation, having incorporated sound thinking, input and research into a clear Act that meets the needs of the Province and municipalities. In order to achieve this vision, an inclusive and comprehensive engagement process was developed to ensure stakeholders across the province have opportunities to provide input to the review.

As part of the MGA review, regional consultations were held in eleven locations around the province to give Albertans an opportunity to provide input face-to-face. In each location, different types of sessions were held, including Technical Sessions, a Business and Industry Session, a Municipal Administrators Session, an Elected Officials Session, and a Public Open House.

These engagements were conducted in February 2014 to April 2014 in 11 locations throughout the province. Each location was held over 3 days in the following locations:

- Brooks
- Calgary
- Edmonton
- Edson
- Fort McMurray
- Grande Prairie
- Lethbridge
- Medicine Hat
- Peace River
- Red Deer
- Vermilion

Sessions were promoted via news releases, direct email invitations, social media, and by the Minister of Municipal Affairs at stakeholder conventions. Information on regional session locations, dates and registration were on the MGA Review website.

Input to the MGA Review has also been provided through other channels, including the MGA Review website ([mgareview.alberta.ca](http://mgareview.alberta.ca)), the MGA Review Consultation Workbook, and official submissions.

## Session Overview

<b>Session</b>	Public Open House
<b>Location</b>	Macdonald Island Park, Fort McMurray
<b>Date</b>	February 13, 2014
<b>Number of Participants</b>	2

- This session was open to anyone who wished to attend. No registration was required.

## Regional Consultation Methodology

### *How the Open House was organized*

Participants were free to browse available materials or to engage in informal conversations with facilitators from Municipal Affairs, KPMG and ADR Education on any MGA relevant topic of interest to them. The Public Open House presented information on six topics that were thought to be of particular importance to the public:

- What rules can municipalities set?
- Why do municipalities change land use plans?
- What services do municipalities provide?
- How are municipalities funded?
- How do municipalities manage growth and development?
- How do we ensure accountability?

The information was presented on handouts and posters. The structure of the Open Houses allowed participants to provide feedback in the following ways:

- Comment cards were available for participants that invited them to note:
  - What is working well under the current MGA;
  - What is not working well under the current MGA;
  - What changes they would suggest; and
  - What the implications of desired changes would be.
- Where possible, facilitators from Municipal Affairs, KPMG and ADR Education took notes to record input provided by participants through informal conversations. Given the informal and unstructured format of these discussions, not all comments from participants may be captured.

### *Reporting*

The summary below documents the input received from participants during the Open House, as well as written feedback provided through comment sheets. This input has been organized according to relevant topics under the three themes for the MGA Review. Comments have not been screened for accuracy and do not reflect consensus of participants. As a result, comments and opinions listed may be contradictory. Comments that applied to issues outside of the scope of the review (e.g., suggested changes to other legislation) have been removed.

It is important to emphasize that this summary reflects the input heard from participants, and does not necessarily reflect the position of the Government of Alberta.

**How the Summary of Responses is Organized**

*Input from session participants is organized according to the three themes for the review:*

- *Governance and Administration*
- *Assessment and Taxation*
- *Planning and Development*

*Within these themes, comments are organized according to the applicable topics for discussion, using the list provided to participants in advance. In some sessions, not all themes may have been discussed.*

# Summary of Input

## **Governance and Administration**

The following input was received and documented related to governance and administration.

### Municipal Accountability, Liability, and Risk Management

#### ***Compliance and accountability***

Comments from participants included that:

- The MGA needs to be able to enforce compliance. There should be a mechanism in the MGA to deal with councillors who are not complying with residency rules.
- A form of “whistleblowing” or public reporting should be considered in the revised MGA to help ensure councils are respecting the legislation.
- The MGA needs to allow municipalities to hold councillors accountable for their meeting attendance.

### Municipal Services and Delivery

#### ***Service provisions***

Comments from participants included that:

- The MGA should outline the minimum requirements for municipally provided essential services.
  - Essential services should include transportation, water and sanitation.
  - The list of essential services could also include services that build the community, such as schools, recreation centres and medical services.
- If a municipality wants to become a town, they should be required to show how they will provide the essential services needed to sustain the new municipality.
- The MGA needs to define which level of government (federal, provincial or municipal) is responsible for which services.
- Municipalities should be required under the MGA to provide affordable housing. Funding should be available from the Province to deliver affordable housing.

## Public Participation and Municipal Relations

### ***Public participation***

Comments from participants included that:

- The MGA needs to be able to hold municipalities accountable in their adherence to the public meeting requirements.
- The MGA should clarify when a public meeting must be held.
- There is a perception that rural municipalities' voices are not heard, even though they generate a lot of revenue for the region and the Province.
  - Rural municipalities are a small population, but are underrepresented in decision-making processes and structures.

## **Planning and Development**

The following input was received and documented related to planning and development.

## Regional Approaches

### ***Managing growth and development***

Comments from participants included that:

- Municipalities should be required to plan for growth, rather than trying to contain it. Plans need to be evolving or “alive,” and should be required to ensure municipal sustainability.
- The MGA should allow municipalities to set their own vision for growth and allow the developer to work within the boundaries set by the municipality.
  - Developers are confrontational because of the financial and banking pressures they face. Municipalities don't have the same pressures to deal with.
- There needs to be clear guidelines in the MGA about who is responsible for providing infrastructure.