

# Municipal Government Act Review

## What We Heard: A Summary of Consultation Input

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Public Open House

Held in Medicine Hat on April 10, 2014

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Developed by KPMG for Alberta Municipal Affairs



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## 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 Medicine Hat.

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>	Southside Events Centre, Medicine Hat
<b>Date</b>	April 15, 2014
<b>Number of Participants</b>	2

- This session was open to anyone who wished to attend.

## 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 Powers, Structures, Annexations and Other Changes

#### ***Municipal Structures***

Comments from participants included that:

- Some municipal areas have a lot of property to assess and earn revenue from. They should be able to incorporate as a specialized municipality, as has happened in northern Alberta.
- Specialized municipalities should be amalgamated.

### Municipal Governance and Administration

#### ***Municipal governance***

Comments from participants included that:

- Ward representation is better than large municipal representation. It's good to have an identified councillor for citizens' issues.
  - The ward system should be required under the MGA.
- It is not right for councillors to protect their own turf by unevenly distributing the electorate in voting wards.
  - There should be a limit set for variance between ward population sizes. A 30 per cent maximum variance would be good, for example.
- Four-year municipal terms aren't working well as a way to hold officials accountable.

### Municipal Accountability, Liability and Risk Management

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

Comments from participants included that:

- Additional mechanisms in the MGA are needed to get rid of councillors in between elections.