

Municipal Government Act Review

What We Heard: A Summary of Consultation Input

Municipal Elected Officials Session
Held in Vermilion on February 21, 2014

Released on June 17, 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
General Comments	5
Governance and Administration	5
Municipal Powers, Structures, Annexations and Other Changes	5
Municipal Governance and Administration	7
Municipal Finances	8
Municipal Accountability, Liability, and Risk Management	9
Municipal Services and Delivery	10
Public Participation and Municipal Relations	11
Assessment and Taxation	13
Taxation and Municipal Finances	13
Exemptions from Assessment and Taxation	14
Market Value, Equalized and Supplementary Assessment	15
Industrial and Agricultural Property Assessment	15
Assessment Administration	17
Public Participation and Assessment Appeals	17
Planning and Development	18
Land Management and Planning Tools	18
Subdivision and Development Authorities and Processes	19
Land Dedication and Use of Reserves	19
Regional Approaches	19
Appendix A: Session Agenda	21

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 Assessment and Taxation Technical Session held in Edson.

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.

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), the MGA Review Consultation Workbook, and official submissions.

Session Overview

Session	Municipal Elected Officials Session
Location	Vermilion Regional Centre, Vermilion
Date	February 21, 2014
Number of Participants	19

- This session was open to current municipal elected officials. Participants were asked to register in advance in order to receive background materials before the session.

Regional Consultation Methodology

How sessions were organized

Regional consultations were structured around one or more of the three themes of the MGA Review:

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

Participants were provided with agendas in advance, which identified a list of potential topics for discussion. These topics were taken directly from the MGA Review Consultation Workbook. Several of the topics for discussion appear under more than one of the three themes of the review because they are relevant to more than one theme (e.g. public participation). The agenda is attached as Appendix A.

At this session, participants provided input through facilitated table discussions. The goal of the facilitated conversations was to give the opportunity to all participants to discuss the issues that mattered most to them. Given the large size and scope of the MGA, participants at each table were asked to focus their discussion on those topics that they felt were most important to provide input on, using the list provided in advance. In addition, this session included time for “open discussion” during which participants could provide any additional input that they felt was important to the review. Table facilitators and note takers included staff from Municipal Affairs, KPMG and ADR Education.

Capturing input and reporting

Input from session participants was captured on flipcharts by facilitators during the discussion. It was explained to participants that:

- Comments were being recorded on flipcharts so that they could be captured and considered by Municipal Affairs as part of the review of the MGA.
- Comments would not be attributed to individuals or organizations.
- Other avenues were also available to provide written input to the review.

The summary below documents the input heard from participants and recorded on flipcharts. These comments have been transcribed and organized according to the list of topics for discussion; they 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 apply 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

General Comments

The following input was received and documented related to the MGA in general. Comments from participants included that:

- The MGA is working well for the most part. The MGA needs to be updated to account for changes in technology.
- Generally the assessment and taxation portion of the MGA is working well. Some minor updates should suffice.

Governance and Administration

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

Municipal Powers, Structures, Annexations and Other Changes

Municipal powers

Comments from participants included that:

- There are concerns about losing municipals powers as a result of the new regional plans.

Municipal structures

Comments from participants included that:

- The MGA needs to redefine “hamlet” and revisit the dissolution of hamlets.
 - The Province should offset the cost to the Municipal Districts when hamlets need help, such as with new sewers.
 - The Province should monitor the financial status of a hamlet so that issues can be identified before a hamlet gets into trouble.
- The specialized municipality structure seems to work well. It can provide different levels of taxation based on regional service levels.
- Currently, the way municipal structures are defined in the MGA pits urban and rural municipalities against each other. The focus becomes money instead of equal collaboration.

- Municipal boundaries don't seem to be that important to the general public. What matters to the public are the services they receive from their municipality.
 - Communities naturally function beyond their boundaries, and the legislation should reflect that.
- A broader provincial review of municipal boundaries is needed as part of the MGA review.
- Regional collaboration needs to be defined more clearly in the MGA.
 - It may help if the Province redefines municipal boundaries into larger regional areas.
- The Province should redraw municipal boundaries through a regulated review process based on population.
 - People are not being represented properly under the current structure of representation. There needs to be an equitable way of counting votes based on who is actually impacted by the change.
 - This would eliminate some contentious issues.
 - This could pit those impacted regions against each other.

Fundamental changes and municipal restructuring

Comments from participants included that:

- There needs to be more education about the different processes for dissolution, annexation, and amalgamation. The intention and starting point of each of these are very different.
- Decisions should be based on a balance between what is best for rural and urban municipalities. Population numbers should not be the only factor.
 - The interest of the Province doesn't represent the interest of rural and smaller municipalities.
 - The MGA only allows for urban municipalities to grow.
 - The MGA needs to include more flexibility around Municipal Districts regarding amalgamation and joint use.
- If regional collaboration is going to be preserved, then a review of the current annexation process is needed. The current process results in "land grabs."
 - To help encourage collaboration, the MGA should have a maximum cap on the amount of land a municipality can annex. There could be 5 year limit, for instance. This could help push development to outer areas and smaller communities.
 - There should be benefits for municipalities in the annexation process.
- The annexation process is onerous, so municipalities are annexing more land than they need so that they do not have to go through the process twice. This results in a loss of revenue for the municipality that is giving up their land and can also tie up land and delay development.
 - The initiating municipality should have to pay the fees for annexation.

- There should be compensation through the annexation process for losses of utilities, franchises and linear revenue.
- The distribution of shallow and deep services creates a challenge around annexations. Urban municipalities are often willing to provide services, but rural municipalities are not interested.
- The current dissolution process is not transparent to other councillors or to the general public. Possible improvements include approved messaging for those who are a part of the viability review team.
- The current process for dissolution is too long and requires improvement.
- Dissolution is a result of financial inequity between municipalities.
- Managing sustainability continues to be a challenge for many smaller municipalities, such as villages.
- There need to be triggers that will notify the Province when smaller municipalities are in financial trouble so the issue can be addressed before the municipality is in distress.
 - Whether the answer is dissolution or there is an opportunity for the municipal district to give support and avoid dissolution, the municipality in question should never get to the point of default or distress.
 - A trigger point needs to be established for when amalgamation or regional cooperation must be considered, such as a “shall” statement in the MGA.
- Non-contiguous amalgamation can offer more benefits for certain communities.
- Involuntary amalgamation, like the Manitoba model, doesn't seem to be working well.

Municipal Governance and Administration

Municipal governance

Comments from participants included that:

- Council powers are working well for the most part.
 - There are some resource issues, such as labour shortages.
- Separation of councils' and administrations' roles seems clear in the MGA. However, the interpretation of these roles can vary considerably between municipalities.
- Training for elected officials should be required in the MGA rather than being an optional orientation. This will increase the knowledge and accountability of council in areas like responsible budgeting.
 - Training could happen before or after election into council.
- *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* requirements should be included in the MGA.

Municipal administration

Comments from participants included that:

- The role of administrator is working well. Administrators are well regulated.
- There should be an updated evaluation for chief administrative officers, with more options for how the evaluation is done.
- The MGA should give the chief administrative officers clear authority to enforce its provisions.

Municipal Finances

Financial administration

Comments from participants included that:

- The current financial legislation and regulations work well.
- Municipalities would like to be able to create access agreements.

Regional funding approaches

Comments from participants included that:

- The current voluntary system for collaboration and regional funding is not sustainable.
 - It is difficult to collaborate if a municipality does not have funds to collaborate.
 - Sharing administrative services might help with financial sustainability.
 - For example, the chief administrative officer position is mandatory, but may not be affordable for all communities.
 - This might be a good indication for measuring sustainability.
- There are greater efficiencies of scale with regionalization.
- Municipalities do not want to see the Ontario or the British Columbia models of regionalization, wherein the region becomes another level of government.
- Rather than limiting regional funding, it should be expanded and recognize all potential regional services.
 - For example, development in Edmonton should be recognized as equal to development in another area, and vice-versa.
- A revenue sharing formula needs to be set that is fair and equitable.
- Rural municipalities want to keep their revenue powers.
 - Rural municipalities are incurring significant costs related to roads, infrastructure, and air quality, so they need to keep revenues from industrial activity.
 - These municipalities need to protect their reserves for future developments.
 - Municipal Sustainability Initiative grants can be used to meet changing needs instead of using rural municipality's reserves.
- There needs to be recognition of need in all areas of the province. Linear revenue sharing on a per capita basis is fair. Everyone in the province uses the services of the large urban areas like Edmonton and Calgary.

Municipal revenue sources

Comments from participants included that:

- Municipalities are too limited in the ways they are allowed to gather revenue.
 - More tools are needed for municipalities to raise and maintain tax dollars locally.
- There is a challenge associated with provincial downloading of responsibilities to municipalities.
 - The Province needs to formally recognize additional services municipalities provide, such as recreation facilities and parks.
 - There needs to be additional funding from the Province, or the ability and flexibility to generate funds in new ways.
 - Additional clarity and education is needed for residents to understand where tax dollars are allocated.
- There is currently an overreliance on grant revenues. This is not a consistent form of revenue, nor is the process simple. This can make long-term planning difficult for municipalities.
- Clarity is required about what grant funding is available to municipalities.
 - There needs to be more clarity around the grant application process. It is not clear whether the MGA or its implementation should include this information.
- A single access point would enable greater accessibility for municipalities to access their grant options.
- Grant incentives based only on population don't work well. Other factors should play a role.
- There should be more flexibility in the grant application process. Streamline the process for grants in general. It needs to become more user-friendly.
- There is an issue regarding accessibility of grant funding. Acceptance of applications appears to be a political process.
- There need to be consistent funding methods across municipalities.
- There should be a complete province-wide review of municipal funding.
 - Ideal funding approaches will take time to establish.
 - There need to be intermediary mechanisms for sharing funding in mean time.
 - The Province needs a long-term funding plan for municipalities.

Municipal Accountability, Liability, and Risk Management

Compliance and accountability

Comments from participants included that:

- Chief administrative officers are well equipped to keep council accountable.

Liability and risk management

Comments from participants included that:

- These provisions are working well for the most part.

- Investment and borrowing limits are reasonable and working well.
- The MGA should keep the statement that as long as municipalities are doing things in good faith, they can't be sued.
- Municipalities are taking on some liability that they shouldn't. For example, some take on railway liability in exchange for trains not sounding their horns in the town at night.
 - Railways are unsafe, but they are not paying municipalities for the risks they bring.

Provincial powers

Comments from participants included that:

- The MGA should include mandates and responsibilities.
 - It is unclear in the MGA who has jurisdiction over "what matters". The environment is one example where responsibility is unclear.
 - The new MGA should be clear on areas where municipalities can exercise natural person powers.
 - Citizens need to be educated on who is responsible for different types of services, such as policing.
- The Province needs to provide municipalities with adequate notice on future changes, such as changes to bridge standards.
- Conflicting strategies between levels of government prevent proper cooperation with municipalities. For example, it is not clear where municipalities should receive direction for sewer and water policy.

Municipal Services and Delivery

Service provisions

Comments from participants included that:

- The provision of services needs to clearly and fairly connect to funding for those services.
 - The option for municipalities to financially contribute to these services is not sufficient.
- Currently the population threshold of 5,000 for policing services is not equitable for all municipalities. There should be no threshold determining when policing services are required.
 - Policing should be considered an "essential service."
 - Proportionally, policing services are a significant cost for smaller municipalities.
 - Policing is a regional service and should be funded regionally.
 - Regional policing currently becomes the financial responsibility of one municipality.

- Administration is also an issue, as the policing salary is paid by the municipality but RCMP does the hiring. This creates a difficult system to maintain accountability.
- More equity is needed between all municipalities' contributions to policing.

Public Participation and Municipal Relations

Municipal relationships and dispute resolution

Comments from participants included that:

- The MGA needs to be refocused on how municipalities can work together.
- Currently, the number of elected officials is what complicates collaboration and service sharing. There should be one elected body per region.
 - The Province should view regions as one community. Different councils create different mindsets.
 - Fewer governance bodies makes for streamlined processes.
- The dispute resolution process is working well.
- Regional cooperation should be encouraged.
 - Municipalities need the ability and incentives to collaborate on the matter of long-term plans for municipalities and their municipal district or region.
 - There should be joint servicing agreements.
- The challenge is that a lot of municipalities don't communicate with each other. It is also challenging that a lot of residential development in rural municipalities occurs close to urban boundaries.
 - Currently, the two types of municipalities are in competition and this isn't healthy.
 - Regions and municipal districts need to have some responsibility to foster growth in smaller areas, such as villages.

Public participation

Comments from participants included that:

- The current MGA is working well in the area of public participation.
- There is a need for more public participation.
 - Sometimes there is no attendance at a hearing, so the decision passes.
 - There may need to be a minimum percentage of the population in attendance in order to pass a decision.
- The range and timing of public participation requirements is an issue.
 - The requirement should be expanded past the adjacent 1.5 km by letter.
 - Public participation can stall projects.
- The MGA should increase flexibility around public participation and notification to find better ways to notify people.
- The public may not feel they have ability to influence things.
 - There are examples of when public participation did change a council's decision.

- More clarity is needed in the MGA about what meetings can be held “in camera” for councils.
- Councillors currently cannot talk about their opinions. They can only discuss what the council as a whole has decided.
 - Some municipalities record votes for and against decisions. It should be a requirement in the MGA that votes be recorded.
 - The MGA should leave it up to council to decide whether they are recorded or not.

Assessment and Taxation

The following input was received and documented related to assessment and taxation.

Taxation and Municipal Finances

Taxation

Comments from participants included that:

- When taxes are unpaid on crown land leases, municipalities cannot recover those dollars. The MGA needs to include a mechanism to recover taxes on crown land.
- There should be a taxation review for portable taxes.
 - “Portable” needs to be more clearly defined in the MGA. For example, three months could be used as a timeframe.
- Municipalities are not able to adequately tax those industries that are impacting infrastructure without also taxing those who don’t impact infrastructure, such as small businesses.
 - Farmers and residents are subsidizing industrial impacts. For this reason, municipalities need the ability to split tax rates.
 - The MGA should not link split mill rates to residential tax rates. There is concern that tax rates could increase substantially if split.
 - The MGA should link mill rates to other non-residential rates in a similar category, such as agriculture, machinery and equipment, and linear taxes.
 - Rather than linking rates, the MGA should leave it up to the citizens to determine whether rates get too high through elections.
 - If rates become too high, business and industry could go to another municipality with lower taxes. This would keep rates in check.
- Abandoned wells and pipelines need to be taxed to encourage the removal of wells and pipeline. Land should be cleared for future development.

Municipal revenue sources

Comments from participants included that:

- Alberta is required to share revenues with the rest of Canada. This argument could be applied when justifying why rural municipalities should be required to share revenues with urban municipalities.
- Municipalities should have the ability to raise revenue through sales tax, “penny taxes” (an example out of the United States) or toll roads. These taxation mechanisms are fair and equitable.

Fees and levies

Comments from participants included that:

- The current options for collecting fees and levies are working well.
- The MGA needs to empower smaller municipalities to use tools, such as fees and levies to promote growth, development and sustainability.
- The MGA needs to outline how municipalities are to receive their share of the provincially collected fees, such as road use agreements, because they are supposed to receive this but never have. Collecting fees from roads, in particular, is difficult.
- Municipalities need the flexibility and power to use levies in new ways. They should be able to be applied to any industry the municipality wants.
 - A method to tax and levy equipment hauling on roads would provide more flexibility. For example, in Saskatchewan, there is a levy based on a dollar amount per cubic meter, per kilometre. This captures the volume and impact of resource flow. This is fairer to industry, which then pays for what is used.
 - Off-site levies could be applied to turning lanes from numbered highways.
 - Toll highways are a possibility that should be explored.
- The current system is unfair. For example, a municipality pays the bill for turning lanes as a result of a provincial development project, but can't charge fees and levies in the same area as it isn't a municipal project.
- The purpose of the well drilling tax is to compensate municipalities for industrial use of roads. Having the tax based on the depth of the well does not align with the costs associated with that well. The costs are the same to the municipality regardless of the depth of the well, so the municipality's revenue shouldn't be based on depth.

Exemptions from Assessment and Taxation

Exemptions and other special tax treatment

Comments from participants included that:

- Currently, the ability to include non-profit exemptions is written as a "may" provision in the MGA, meaning it is not mandatory. However, under certain circumstances it can be difficult to ensure the property is still considered non-profit and enforce compliance if there are status changes.
- The role of administration to review non-profit exemptions regularly needs to be clarified.

Market Value, Equalized and Supplementary Assessment

Market value assessment and administration

Comments from participants included that:

- Market value assessment is working well, but needs to be expanded to farm property.
- There should be a better balance between market value and equalized assessment.
- Market value assessment presents a challenge in small municipalities due to the lack of data.

Equalized assessment

Comments from participants included that:

- Municipalities should not have to collect provincial taxes, such as the education tax.
 - Whether or not a municipality is able to collect the education tax from their residents, municipalities still have to pay the education tax bill back to the Province.
 - The Province should administer the education tax.

Progressive and supplementary assessment

Comments from participants included that:

- There should be more progressive and supplementary assessment.

Industrial and Agricultural Property Assessment

Linear property assessment

Comments from participants included that:

- Linear assessment is currently working well.
 - Consistent linear assessment rates benefit all Albertans, including businesses and indirectly all taxpayers.
 - There needs to be a constant rate or a standardized rate set by the Province.
- The assessment and taxation of pipelines is not working well.
 - Assessment and taxation doesn't begin until the pipeline is being used. This should be changed because the pipe is still in the ground and using the land area, even if it is not operating.
 - There is no taxation mechanism to account for damage done to roads and other infrastructure during the development of pipeline. Taxes can only be collected once the tax is implemented.
- Standardized linear mill rates will ultimately affect other rates, but they should be separate.
- Linear property revenue should be distributed regionally.

- If linear revenue is shared across municipalities, a per capita distribution is not necessarily fair. Different communities provide different services and the distribution of revenue should reflect that.
- A standardized distribution formula doesn't have to mean province-wide distribution, as it could be based regionally.
 - A regional distribution formula could be based on the Municipal Sustainability Initiative formula.
- Per capita linear pooling would only benefit some municipalities. It is not a good idea, as it would only transfer issues from one area to another area.
- The impact of linear property is within the boundary of the municipality that has the linear property. That municipality is taking on the infrastructure cost to support the linear operations and should receive the revenue.

Machinery and equipment property assessment

Comments from participants included that:

- Taxation of machinery and equipment needs to be reviewed. The current distribution of revenues is not fair.
- In order to increase fairness, education tax should be charged on machinery and equipment.
 - This could reduce the amount of taxes collected from citizens.
 - It would also lower the amount of education tax collected on linear property.

Farm property assessment

Comments from participants included that:

- Farm property assessment is working well.
- Farm property assessment needs review, as the current provisions are outdated.
 - Farm property assessment needs to be updated to reflect current land values.
 - If municipalities want to collect more from farm land, they just need to adjust the tax rate. There is no need to move to a market value system.
 - Moving to market value assessment for farm land would result in municipalities reducing tax rates. Farmers would then be primarily paying service taxes, such as the education tax.
- The MGA should ensure that taxes for services are more reflective of the land use.
 - The MGA should include flexibility that land can be valued on its future use rather than its current use.
- Issues associated with farm property assessment are related to contentious annexations. Residents don't want their property to be taxed differently when their land is annexed from the rural municipality.

Assessment Administration

Comments from participants included that:

- There is often limited knowledge and experience related to assessment in small communities. This can significantly affect the sustainability of a community if taxes are not based on accurate assessments.
 - Small villages are usually the example of this. Their capacity issues in assessment administration needs to be recognized in the MGA.

Public Participation and Assessment Appeals

Public participation

Comments from participants included that:

- Current provisions on public participation seem to be working well.

Assessment complaints and appeals

Comments from participants included that:

- The current appeals system works well, but there is a general misunderstanding from the public on what is being appealed, such as assessment versus taxation. It is the responsibility of the assessor to explain this to the public.
- Assessment Review Board training is required every three years, but the Municipal Affairs course is not useful, especially if appeals are really infrequent.

Planning and Development

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

Land Management and Planning Tools

Statutory plans and land use bylaws

Comments from participants included that:

- Land use plans are currently flexible enough to allow municipalities to make changes based on their need. They are working well.
- There should be more communication between the Province, industry and municipalities about long-term plans that will affect municipal land, so that municipal plans are not halted.
 - For example, sometimes municipalities are told by the Province to stop a development in a particular area because industry is coming in to develop there instead. This results in losses for the municipality and has impacts on infrastructure.
- Regional governance would allow better land planning, such as through Inter-municipal Development Plans.
 - Local land use planning may need to be considered in regional planning.
- Inter-municipal Development Plans are successfully helping municipalities to collaborate.
- Inter-municipal Development Plans should be mandatory for municipalities with adjacent land.
 - However, that doesn't mean the plans should have any authority to enforce compliance.
 - Currently, entrance into these plans and compliance are dependent on municipal relationships.
 - If plans became mandatory, it is not clear who should be responsible for the costs.
 - A provincial board or committee could step in as the intermediary to support negotiations between municipalities that don't want to come to the table.

Subdivision and Development Authorities and Processes

Administrative decision-making processes

Comments from participants included that:

- The subdivision development processes work well.
- The responsibility is on the municipality to deal with the developments that they allow.

Land Dedication and Use of Reserves

Land dedication (reserves)

Comments from participants included that:

- Reserve land dedication processes are generally working well.
- Municipalities want more flexibility in dealing with reserve land.
 - The approach in the MGA is too inflexible to allow municipalities to deal with their municipal reserve land needs.
 - Environmental reserves are an area that does not require additional flexibility.
- Municipalities want to see guidelines around encroachment to allow a certain level of infringement onto reserve land.
 - If this is not possible, then municipalities want to see provincial enforcement of encroachment on reserve land.

Regional Approaches

Managing growth and development

Comments from participants included that:

- There needs to be better guidance from the Province to the municipalities for long-term planning due to lack of expertise at the local level.
- The MGA needs mechanisms to monitor and control certain land use.
 - Land use needs to be more fair and equitable.
 - There should be more environmental testing mandated for large projects, such as windmills.
 - More support is needed for corridor planning related to future pipelines.
 - Urban sprawl needs to be contained and farm land needs to be protected.
- The MGA should address “brownfield sites” and their use.
 - This impacts every municipality, but has more impact on smaller ones.
 - Municipalities want to see a stalled development clause. For example, this would apply to prime brownfield real estate.
 - Municipalities should be able to expropriate this land after a certain amount of time.

- Compliance with cleanup levels should be informed by future use.
- The British Columbia model is a good example for dealing with brownfield sites.
- Municipalities want more control over planning and development processes to grow the way they want to grow.

Regional funding approaches

Comments from participants included that:

- The regional approach is always best. Municipalities have to work together to have optimal growth.
- There is currently a fair bit of revenue sharing. The MGA enables this well.
 - Fire services and recreation centres are good examples of revenue sharing.
 - Voluntary cooperation works well in these instances.
 - Justification and mutual benefit make this a natural process.
- There needs to be more provincial coordination of municipal data to promote regional collaboration.
 - The MGA requires municipalities to share data about municipal lands. However, the Province has collected data, but the municipalities don't see the results.
 - All municipalities should have access to other municipalities' provincially held data for planning and budgeting purposes.

Appendix A: Session Agenda

MGA Review: Elected Officials Session

Agenda Item	Timing			
<p>1. Welcome and introductions</p>	10:00-10:15			
<p>2. Potential topics for discussion:</p> <p>The following topics will be available at table discussions:</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top; width: 33%;"> <p>Governance and Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Municipal powers ▪ Municipal structures ▪ Fundamental changes and municipal restructuring ▪ Municipal governance ▪ Municipal administration ▪ Financial administration ▪ Regional funding approaches ▪ Municipal revenue sources ▪ Fees and levies ▪ Compliance and accountability ▪ Liability and risk management ▪ Provincial powers ▪ Service provisions ▪ Regional services commissions ▪ Municipally controlled corporations ▪ Municipal relationships and dispute resolution ▪ Public participation ▪ Municipal Government Board </td> <td style="vertical-align: top; width: 33%;"> <p>Assessment and Taxation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Taxation ▪ Municipal revenue sources ▪ Fees and levies ▪ Exemptions and other special tax treatment ▪ Market value assessment and administration ▪ Equalized assessment ▪ Progressive and supplementary assessment ▪ Linear property assessment ▪ Machinery and equipment property assessment ▪ Transportation properties ▪ Farm property assessment ▪ Assessment administration ▪ Public participation ▪ Assessment complaints and appeals ▪ Municipal Government Board </td> <td style="vertical-align: top; width: 33%;"> <p>Planning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fees and levies ▪ Statutory plans and land use bylaws ▪ Planning authorities ▪ Administrative decision-making processes ▪ Land dedication (reserves) ▪ Municipal relationships and dispute resolution ▪ Managing growth and development ▪ Regional funding approaches ▪ Municipal Government Board ▪ Public participation ▪ Planning and inter-municipal appeals </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Governance and Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Municipal powers ▪ Municipal structures ▪ Fundamental changes and municipal restructuring ▪ Municipal governance ▪ Municipal administration ▪ Financial administration ▪ Regional funding approaches ▪ Municipal revenue sources ▪ Fees and levies ▪ Compliance and accountability ▪ Liability and risk management ▪ Provincial powers ▪ Service provisions ▪ Regional services commissions ▪ Municipally controlled corporations ▪ Municipal relationships and dispute resolution ▪ Public participation ▪ Municipal Government Board 	<p>Assessment and Taxation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Taxation ▪ Municipal revenue sources ▪ Fees and levies ▪ Exemptions and other special tax treatment ▪ Market value assessment and administration ▪ Equalized assessment ▪ Progressive and supplementary assessment ▪ Linear property assessment ▪ Machinery and equipment property assessment ▪ Transportation properties ▪ Farm property assessment ▪ Assessment administration ▪ Public participation ▪ Assessment complaints and appeals ▪ Municipal Government Board 	<p>Planning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fees and levies ▪ Statutory plans and land use bylaws ▪ Planning authorities ▪ Administrative decision-making processes ▪ Land dedication (reserves) ▪ Municipal relationships and dispute resolution ▪ Managing growth and development ▪ Regional funding approaches ▪ Municipal Government Board ▪ Public participation ▪ Planning and inter-municipal appeals 	10:15-10:45
<p>Governance and Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Municipal powers ▪ Municipal structures ▪ Fundamental changes and municipal restructuring ▪ Municipal governance ▪ Municipal administration ▪ Financial administration ▪ Regional funding approaches ▪ Municipal revenue sources ▪ Fees and levies ▪ Compliance and accountability ▪ Liability and risk management ▪ Provincial powers ▪ Service provisions ▪ Regional services commissions ▪ Municipally controlled corporations ▪ Municipal relationships and dispute resolution ▪ Public participation ▪ Municipal Government Board 	<p>Assessment and Taxation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Taxation ▪ Municipal revenue sources ▪ Fees and levies ▪ Exemptions and other special tax treatment ▪ Market value assessment and administration ▪ Equalized assessment ▪ Progressive and supplementary assessment ▪ Linear property assessment ▪ Machinery and equipment property assessment ▪ Transportation properties ▪ Farm property assessment ▪ Assessment administration ▪ Public participation ▪ Assessment complaints and appeals ▪ Municipal Government Board 	<p>Planning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fees and levies ▪ Statutory plans and land use bylaws ▪ Planning authorities ▪ Administrative decision-making processes ▪ Land dedication (reserves) ▪ Municipal relationships and dispute resolution ▪ Managing growth and development ▪ Regional funding approaches ▪ Municipal Government Board ▪ Public participation ▪ Planning and inter-municipal appeals 		

Agenda Item	Timing										
<p>3. Table Facilitation</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="310 422 1157 659"> <tr> <td data-bbox="310 422 618 468">Block 1: 10:45-11:45</td> <td data-bbox="618 422 1157 468">Governance and Administration Topics</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="310 468 1157 514" style="text-align: center;"><i>Lunch (1 hour)</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="310 514 618 560">Block 2: 12:45-1:45</td> <td data-bbox="618 514 1157 560">Assessment and Taxation Topics</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="310 560 1157 606" style="text-align: center;"><i>Break (15 min)</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="310 606 618 653">Block 3: 2:00-3:00</td> <td data-bbox="618 606 1157 653">Planning and Development Topics</td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion will focus on what is working well, desired changes, and potential impacts of changes to the legislation 	Block 1: 10:45-11:45	Governance and Administration Topics	<i>Lunch (1 hour)</i>		Block 2: 12:45-1:45	Assessment and Taxation Topics	<i>Break (15 min)</i>		Block 3: 2:00-3:00	Planning and Development Topics	10:45-3:00
Block 1: 10:45-11:45	Governance and Administration Topics										
<i>Lunch (1 hour)</i>											
Block 2: 12:45-1:45	Assessment and Taxation Topics										
<i>Break (15 min)</i>											
Block 3: 2:00-3:00	Planning and Development Topics										
4. Break	3:00-3:15										
<p>5. Open discussion</p> <p>Are there any other relevant topics participants want to address?</p>	3:15-3:45										
6. Wrap-up	3:45-4:00										