

Municipal Government Act Review

Final Submission

Recommendation:

That the City's submission to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, identifying the City's recommended changes to the *Municipal Government Act*, set out in Attachment 1 of the June 11, 2014, Office of the City Manager report CR_1322, be approved.

Report Summary

This report includes the proposed City of Edmonton submission to the Government of Alberta to help advance Edmonton's interests with respect to changes needed to the *Municipal Government Act*.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the April 29, 2014, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Members of Council provide written questions and comments regarding the *Municipal Government Act* Review, as outlined in the April 22, 2014, Office of the City Manager report CR_1007, to the Office of the City Clerk, by 4 p.m. on May 5, 2014.

Report

Background

- The *Municipal Government Act* is one of Alberta's largest pieces of legislation.
- This 500 page *Act* governs 349 municipalities across the province (from a summer village with a population of 10, to a big city like Edmonton with a population of over 840,000).
- In 2014, the Government of Alberta embarked on a province-wide consultation process to gather feedback on opportunities to modernize the *Municipal Government Act*, with plans for introducing new legislation in the Spring of 2015.
- This amendment process represents the first formal/complete review of the *Municipal Government Act* since its inception in 1995.
- The Government of Alberta's consultation process provides an opportunity for any citizen, business, industry, municipality or any other stakeholder to share their views on the *Municipal Government Act*.

City Administration's Review Process

- Over the last several months, Administration has reviewed the *Municipal Government Act* to identify City interests and help formulate a written submission that could be provided to the Government of Alberta by their June 13, 2014, deadline for comments.

- To support Council's continued awareness of any draft changes to the *Municipal Government Act* as they were being contemplated, Administration has:
 - provided Council with a number of updates on Administration's review including sharing: a communications plan and overall timelines; high-level messages; and, identifying how specific changes to the *Municipal Government Act* could align with the City's areas of interest.
 - hosted a number of information sessions with Councillors, and conducted a number of one-on-one interviews, to improve shared understanding of specific issues.
 - undertaken a process to facilitate individual Council questions and comments regarding the 26 possible changes to the *Municipal Government Act*. The results of the feedback received identified that:
 - 13 of 13 respondents indicated support for the following 5 draft changes to the *Municipal Government Act* (Exemptions, Regional Revenue Pooling and compensation, Tax Tool Kit, Over-sizing Improvement Agreements, and Natural Areas).
 - 12 of 13 respondents indicated support for the following 19 draft changes to the *Municipal Government Act* (Relationship with Big Cities, Municipal Governance, Natural Person Powers, Liability & Risk, Enhanced Data Collection and Dissemination, Clearer Assessment Cycles, Improved Administrative Processes, Farmland, Machinery & Equipment, Linear Property, Education & Health, Supplementary Assessment, Offsite Levies, Ensuring Equity, Complete Communities, Cost Recovery, Regional Facilities, Municipal Reserves, and City Regions).
 - 11 of 13 respondents indicated support for the following draft change to the *Municipal Government Act* (Municipal Structures).
 - 10 of 13 respondents indicated support for the following draft change to the *Municipal Government Act* (Simplified Complaint Process).
- While the Government of Alberta has established a consultation process for how citizens and other stakeholders can provide direct feedback during their review of the *Municipal Government Act*, Administration had undertaken some additional consultation to help better understand the perspectives of other stakeholders as they related to the possible changes to the *Municipal Government Act* shared with Council.
- Consultation activities consisted of:
 - hosting a one-day workshop with a cross-section of our community to gather their input and feedback on the potential *Municipal Government Act* changes Administration had drafted.
 - creating a webpage to provide citizens with information on Administration's review of the *Municipal Government Act*, where to find more information, and identify how they can share their opinions.
 - providing all other municipalities in the Edmonton Region, and a number of other large cities across Alberta, with our potential *Municipal Government Act* changes for review and comment.

- examining the perspectives of other advocacy groups that have been publicly communicated.
- continued involvement with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association by sharing respective positions and exploring opportunities for joint advocacy.

Refinement of Proposed *Municipal Government Act* Changes

- Following Administration's review and analysis of all the feedback and insights collected (e.g., Community Engagement Workshop, other municipalities contacted, Council perspectives shared, and other stakeholder comments received), a number of refinements have been incorporated. Some of the key enhancements are as follows:
 - where possible, recommended changes to the *Municipal Government Act* have been unbundled into separate points to facilitate subsequent Council discussion/approval processes.
 - a number of friendly refinements have been added to the recommended changes to the *Municipal Government Act* (e.g., providing additional clarity, specificity and consistency in terminology; establishing clearer parameters; reframing to support further implementation; providing additional issues and examples to help illustrate intent and overall rationale; etc.).
 - addition of a new high-level principle reinforcing the need for regional approaches to planning and distribution of costs and benefits associated with growth.
 - addition of a new recommended change to the *Municipal Government Act* that strengthens our ability to address affordable housing needs.
 - clarifying where recommended changes to the *Municipal Government Act* support brownfield redevelopment.
 - repositioning the responsibility for defining a complete community from the provincial to the municipal level (in recognition that creating a one-size-fits-all definition would be counter to providing the flexibility to meet the needs of each municipality).

Submission Document

- A formal submission has been prepared (see attachment 1) that has been structured to help:
 - reinforce and align with interests to have a Big City Charter that addresses the more complex and unique needs of Edmonton.
 - outline 27 high-level *Municipal Government Act* issues that the City considers critical for the Government to address across three major areas (Governance and Administration, Assessment and Taxation, Planning and Development).
 - clarify which issues broadly apply across all municipalities from those that are more specific to meeting the needs of big cities.

Next Steps

- Subject to Council approval, the Government of Alberta will receive our City's formal submission by June 13, 2014, for its consideration.
- The City will also have an opportunity to present its proposed changes to the *Municipal Government Act* in conjunction with other groups at a special summit on the *Municipal Government Act* (being hosted by the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association on June 18 and 19, 2014).

Corporate Outcomes

Given the scope of the *Municipal Government Act*, the Government's review process provides an important opportunity to advance many of the goals and outcomes included in the City of Edmonton's Strategic Plans.

Justification of Recommendation

To provide the Government of Alberta with the City of Edmonton's feedback on the *Municipal Government Act* to help identify and advance Edmonton's interests.

Attachment

1. Review of the *Municipal Government Act* - City of Edmonton Submission

Others Reviewing this Report

- D. Wandzura, General Manager, Transportation Service
- R. G. Klassen, General Manager, Sustainable Development
- K. Rozmahel, General Manager, Corporate Services
- L. Cochrane, General Manager, Community Services
- L. Rosen, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer