

**Alberta Municipal Sustainability Strategy**  
**Self-Assessment Questionnaire**  
**Promoting Municipal Sustainability**

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## INTRODUCTION

Sustainable, responsive, and accountable municipal governments remain a key element in ensuring a prosperous province, now and into the future. In recognition of this reality, Alberta Municipal Affairs and the province's major municipal associations have partnered on the development of this Self-Assessment Questionnaire (questionnaire).

The questionnaire is intended to provide local municipal councils and administrations with tools to evaluate and understand their current situation, to identify areas of strength to continue building upon, and also to identify areas where improvement may be desirable or even necessary. It is designed primarily for voluntary use at the discretion of each individual municipality, although Municipal Affairs also intends to incorporate the questionnaire, or at least elements of it, into some of the ministry's practices and programs.

This questionnaire covers eight broad areas. It will become evident that they are not mutually exclusive and must be looked at as a whole when addressing municipal viability and sustainability. In addition, the questionnaire provides linkages to capacity-building tools relevant to each respective topic area, thereby offering easy access to meaningful opportunities to strengthen municipal performance where desired or necessary. The eight broad topic areas addressed in the questionnaire are:

1. *Sustainable governance* – addresses topics such as council practices and procedures, compliance with legislation, citizen engagement, and strategic planning.
2. *Operational and administrative capacity* – addresses the capacity of the municipality to operate on a daily basis and support council decisions.
3. *Financial stability* – addresses the municipality's capacity to generate and manage revenues sufficient to provide necessary infrastructure and services to the public.
4. *Service delivery* – addresses the capacity of the municipality to provide essential services that meet residents' expectations and any appropriate standards.
5. *Regional co-operation* – addresses the municipality's approach to collaborating with neighbours for the benefit of local and regional residents.
6. *Infrastructure* – addresses the municipality's capacity to effectively and efficiently manage public infrastructure on behalf of residents.
7. *Community well-being* – addresses local community characteristics that contribute to the vitality of the community and the long-term viability of the municipality.
8. *Risk management* – addresses the capacity of the municipality to identify and manage key risks on behalf of residents.

Some questions in the questionnaire relate to the key sustainability measures used by the Government of Alberta, and are denoted by a single asterisk (\*). Some of the practices are legislated requirements, and are indicated by double asterisks (\*\*).

## THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS – ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS

### Who should be using this questionnaire?

The questionnaire is designed for municipal leaders who want to:

- gain a better understanding and awareness of their current and future municipal viability and sustainability; and,

- identify those areas where the municipality might want to focus efforts and develop strategic approaches in order to improve viability and sustainability.

### **Who should complete this questionnaire?**

Ideally, the questionnaire is designed to be filled out by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and other administrative and operational staff and will be approved by council. Ultimately, who is directly involved in actually filling out the questionnaire will be dependent on each municipality's individual capacity and circumstances.

Once the questionnaire is completed, the CAO should review it with council to solicit input, seek approval and to identify areas that require additional attention.

### **Is a municipality required to complete this assessment?**

A municipality may work through the questionnaire independently; however, there may also be situations where Municipal Affairs may require a municipality to complete the assessment. These mandatory situations may include:

- **Performance on key measures**

If a municipality is flagged by Municipal Affairs as a result of its performance on key measure criteria, the municipality may be required to work through the toolkit. The municipality would first be contacted by the ministry to discuss the circumstances contributing to the results on the key measures. Any requirement for the municipality to work through the toolkit would be at the Minister's discretion. These key measures are denoted by an asterisk (\*) in the questionnaire.

- **Citizen petition for a viability review**

Where residents of a municipality submit a sufficient petition requesting a viability review, the Minister will require the completion of the questionnaire prior to making a determination as to whether a viability review is warranted. If it is concluded that the citizen petition for a viability study is not related to viability challenges, the petitioners would be advised of other avenues available to them to address their concerns.

- **Council resolution requesting a viability review**

Where the council of a municipality requests a viability review, the Minister will require the completion of the questionnaire prior to making a determination as to whether a viability review is warranted.

### **How long does it take to complete?**

Completion time will depend on many factors, such as having all relevant documents readily available and the experience and knowledge of administrative staff.

As a suggested best practice, a municipality could:

- Have the CAO and other administrative and operational staff complete the questionnaire as objectively as possible;
- Depending on the results of the assessment, you may want to set aside a half or full day retreat for the CAO, CEO, council, and senior staff to review the completed questionnaire to identify viability challenges within the municipality and create an action plan.

### **What information is needed to complete the questionnaire?**

Some of the questions require the collection of data relating to:

- information included on *Financial Information Returns*

- council procedure;
- demographics;
- details on the composition of the municipality's assessment base;
- the municipal tax roll;
- municipal and regional planning;
- existing service sharing agreements;
- community organizations; and
- local election statistics.

### **What is done with the questionnaire after completion?**

Information on interpreting the results of the questionnaire, and determining next steps, is included at the end of the questionnaire in the sections "Interpreting the Results of Your Self-Assessment" and "Creating an Action Plan".

In those situations where the Minister has required the municipality to complete the questionnaire, the completed document must be submitted to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

If the questionnaire has been completed voluntarily by the municipality, the municipality should review the responses, identify areas for improvement, and identify appropriate capacity-building tools to support efforts to improve.

### **How can I get assistance?**

Although the questionnaire is intended to be easy to read and follow, some questions may arise or you may have difficulty obtaining the information necessary to answer the indicator questions. If you require assistance, please contact any or all of the following:

**Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties:** 780-955-4079, or via email at [kim@aamdc.com](mailto:kim@aamdc.com).

**Alberta Urban Municipalities Association:** 780-433-4431, toll-free within Alberta, 310-AUMA (2862) or via email at [main@auma.ca](mailto:main@auma.ca)

**Alberta Municipal Affairs:** 780-427-2225, or via email at [lgsmail@gov.ab.ca](mailto:lgsmail@gov.ab.ca).

### **Is there cost associated with completing the questionnaire?**

There is no direct cost associated with utilizing this questionnaire, other than the time required to prepare for and participate in discussions surrounding each of the items.

### **Is use of the questionnaire a one-time activity?**

That is entirely up to the municipality. Some municipalities may wish to complete it on a regular basis; for example every two, three or five years. Periodic use and/or review would allow the municipality to set goals based on their evaluations and monitor their viability and sustainability over time.

# **SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

## **1. SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE**

### **Citizen Engagement**

	Yes	No	Comments
1.1 Does your municipality have a formally adopted citizen-engagement plan?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.2 Does your municipality have a process or plan to:			
i. Engage citizens in the preparation of the budget?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
ii. Communicate the budget to citizens?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.3 Does your municipality publish an annual report, including more than financial information?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.4 Does your municipality conduct a citizen satisfaction survey?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.5 If yes to 1.4 does it address:			
i. Citizen satisfaction with the municipal corporation?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
ii. Citizen satisfaction with annual reports?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

### **Local Elections**

1.6 Is the community willing and interested in serving on council?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.7 Is the community willing to serve on municipal committees or boards?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.8 Over the course of the last three municipal general elections, has there been an increase in voter turnout?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.9 Has the municipality received sufficient nominations by nomination day to fill all available council positions in each of the last three general elections?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

## Municipal Councils

1.10	Does your municipality hold regularly scheduled council meetings? **	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.11	Do all councillors normally attend? **	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.12	Do councillors have a role in, or participate on, committees, boards, regional governance bodies, advisory groups, etc.?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.13	Has your council adopted a council procedural bylaw for council meetings? If yes:	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	i. Is it current?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	ii. Does it meet council's needs?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.14	Does your council have a Policy and Procedures Manual (including, for example, council travel policy, media communications, responding to citizens, contact with Government, etc.)?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

## Training Opportunities and Participation

1.15	Do your councillors regularly update their knowledge of municipal government through participation in municipal education, training or development?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.16	Does your council provide any professional development funding for councillors (e.g., training, travel to conferences, etc.)?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

## Strategic and Long-Term Planning Ability

1.17	Does your municipality have council-approved long-term and strategic plans (including for example a Municipal Sustainability Plan or an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan?)	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	i. If yes, do they include performance measures and benchmarks?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

1.18	Are there formal avenues for active citizen involvement in:			
	i. Strategic planning in the community?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	ii. Long-term planning in the community?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.19	Does your municipality have an up to date:			
	i. Business plan,	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	ii. Multi-year budget;	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	iii. Land use/zoning (municipal) plan that is less than 10 years old;	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	iv. Municipal Development Plan that is less than 10 years old;	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	v. Capital plan for the next five or more years; and an	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	vi. Economic development plan.	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

## 2. OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

### Human Resources

2.1	Does your municipality have Human Resources Policies and Practices in place?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	i. Are they current?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	ii. Do they meet the municipality's needs?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
2.2	Is the municipality able to attract and retain knowledgeable administrative and operational staff with sufficient training and credentials to meet the requirements set out in their respective job descriptions?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

### Training and Development Opportunities

2.3	Does your municipality support staff supplementing their education with relevant post-secondary training and/or attendance at relevant conferences?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
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2.4	Does the municipality formally set aside funds to ensure that staff receives the training necessary to support any required accreditation?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
2.5	Does your municipality provide developmental support to staff (e.g., performance reviews, coaching, mentoring or on the job training)?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

### Technology Resources

2.6	Does your municipality have high-speed internet access?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
2.7	Does your municipality have Information Technology (IT) support in place?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
2.8	Does your municipality have an information technology (IT) plan?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	i. Is it current?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	ii. Does it meet the municipality's needs?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

## 3. FINANCIAL STABILITY

### Budget

3.1	Is municipal spending generally within +/- 5% of the approved operating budget each year?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.2	Does the administration provide written updates to council on the municipality's finances and budget performance in a timely manner in advance of council meetings?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.3	Does your municipality have a process to formally link the municipal budget to the municipal business plan?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.4	With respect to your most recent annual financial statements, what percentage of annual municipal expenditures is spent on general government (i.e., council and administration)?	_____%		

3.5	With respect to your most recent annual financial statements, what percentage of annual municipal expenditures is spent on servicing municipal debt (principal and interest)?	_____%		
3.6	Does the council monitor the municipality's actual vs. budgeted municipal revenues and expenditures on a minimum of a quarterly basis?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.7	Has your municipality reported an accumulated deficit, net of equity in tangible capital assets, for the past three fiscal (calendar) years? *	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.8	Does your municipality have less than a 1:1 ratio of current assets to current liabilities? *	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.9	Has your municipality received a "qualified audit opinion", "denial of opinion" or an "adverse opinion" with respect to your most recent annual financial statements? *	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

### Debt

3.10	Is your municipality operating within the regulated debt limits? **	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.11	Does your municipality have outstanding short-term debt (e.g., lines of credit, overdraft) at the end of the year?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.12	Does your municipality experience cash flow issues that require you to access short-term loans on a regular basis throughout the year?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.13	Has your municipality reached 80% of its debt or debt service limit? *	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

## Revenue Growth

3.14	<p>Have your municipality's property tax revenues grown by close to the rate of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) over the past five years?</p> <p><i>[Information on the Alberta CPI is available on the Statistics Canada website at <a href="http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/econ09j-eng.htm">http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/econ09j-eng.htm</a>]</i></p>	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.15	Does your municipality derive any revenue from investments?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	i. If yes, have your municipality's revenues from investments grown by close to the rate of the Consumer Price Index over the past five years?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.16	Does your municipal revenue growth reflect growth in the community?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.17	Does your municipality take appropriate advantage of grant funding by considering the benefits of the increased revenue, while also considering the consequences of obtaining the grant (e.g., requirements to meet funding conditions, pay costs for future maintenance of new capital infrastructure, etc.)?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.18	Based on the annual audited financial statements, have provincial and federal grants accounted for more than 50% of your municipality's total revenue in each of the past three fiscal (calendar) years? *	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

## Taxes (rates, adequacy and comparability with neighbours)

3.19	<p>Has your municipality's equalized assessment base grown over the last ten years?</p> <p><i>[Equalized assessment information is available on the Municipal Affairs website at <a href="http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/mc_property_assessment_and_taxation_reports.cfm">http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/mc_property_assessment_and_taxation_reports.cfm</a>]</i></p>	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
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3.20	Has your municipality's non-residential assessment base declined over the past 10 years? *	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.21	Are your municipality's taxes competitive with:			
	i. other municipalities within your region; and	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	ii. other comparable municipalities? <i>[Information on municipal tax rates is available on the Municipal Affairs website at <a href="http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/mc_municipal_profiles.cfm">http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/mc_municipal_profiles.cfm</a> by selecting the "Property Tax Rates" profile type]</i>	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.22	Are tax payments generally kept up to date for:			
	i. residential taxation;	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	ii. business taxation?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.23	Do you have a collection process for outstanding tax accounts for:			
	i. residential taxation;	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	ii. business taxation?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.24	Are the major industries that provide tax base and employment stable or growing?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.25	Does the largest single ratepayer account for more than 20% of total municipal property tax revenues?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	i. If yes, how stable is this source of revenue? Unstable _____ Stable _____ Very stable _____ Unknown _____	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.26	Does your municipality have more than 5% of current property tax unpaid for the most recent completed fiscal year? *	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

3.27	Has the overall percentage of tax arrears increased in the past five years?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
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### Utilities

3.28	Are your municipality's municipal utility rates competitive with:			
	i. other municipalities within your region; and	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	ii. other comparable municipalities?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.29	Has your municipality adopted full cost accounting for utilities?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.30	Do your utility rates generate sufficient revenue to cover the cost of operating and sustaining the municipal utility system?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	i. If no, has your municipality adopted a transition plan to ensure utility rates generate sufficient revenue to cover the cost of operating and sustaining the municipal utility system?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.31	Are utility payments collected from users on a regular basis?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	i. If no, do you have a collection process for outstanding utility accounts?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

### Financial Planning and Risk Management

3.32	Does your municipality make use of financial reserves to support long-term capital needs and/or risk mitigation?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
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### Financial Reporting

3.33	Has your municipality missed the legislated May 1 reporting date for the annual audited financial statements in each of the last 2 years? * **	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
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#### 4. SERVICE DELIVERY

4.1	Has your municipality established standards for the services that are delivered?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
4.2	Does your municipality have a formal process to review and evaluate compliance with those standards?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
i.	Is it current?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
ii.	Does it meet the municipality's needs?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

#### 5. REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

##### Regional Commissions and other Intermunicipal Arrangements

5.1	Does your municipality have the ability to share services with one or more adjacent communities (considering geography and other factors you feel are relevant)?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
5.2	Does your municipality have intermunicipal agreements (e.g., recreation, building inspection duties, waste disposal, snow clearing/road maintenance, utility infrastructure, economic development officer and/or a CAO)?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
i.	If yes, are you satisfied with these agreements?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
5.3	Does your municipality regularly communicate with your municipal neighbours on a less formal basis (e.g., CAO meetings, joint municipal department or staff meetings)?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

##### Planning

5.4	Is there an intermunicipal development plan in place in the municipality?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
5.5	Does your municipality have formal arrangements for professional planning expertise when required (e.g., municipal employees and/or contractors)?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

## 6. INFRASTRUCTURE

6.1	Is your municipality compliant with reporting requirements related to tangible capital assets (TCA)? **	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
6.2	Has your municipality implemented an infrastructure management system?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
6.3	Has your municipality completed an inventory of all municipal infrastructures?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
6.4	Has your municipality completed an assessment of the condition of all municipal infrastructures?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
6.5	Has your municipality adopted a plan for maintaining municipal infrastructure?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	i. If yes, is the plan fully funded?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
6.6	Is the remaining value of TCA less than 30% of the original cost? *	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

## 7. COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

### Demographics

7.1	Has your municipality experienced a decline in population over the last 20 years? *  <i>[Population information is available on the Municipal Affairs website at <a href="http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/mc_municipal_profiles.cfm">http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/mc_municipal_profiles.cfm</a> by selecting the "Statistics" profile type]</i>	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
7.2	Over the past five years, has the municipality's population increased?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

<p>7.3 What is the approximate age composition of the residents of your municipality?</p> <p>0-19 years _____ %</p> <p>20-54 years _____ %</p> <p>55+ years _____ %</p> <p><i>[2011 federal census information, including age composition, is available on the Statistics Canada website at <a href="http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E">http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E</a>]</i></p>			
<p>7.4 In the last five years (or the most recent five-year federal census cycle) has the number of children and youth under 19 increased within your municipality?</p>	<p>Y <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>N <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

### Economic Vitality

<p>7.5 Are young people able to find work in the area?</p>	<p>Y <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>N <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>7.6 Is unemployment an issue in your community?</p>	<p>Y <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>N <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>7.7 Has the number of new development permits been stable or growing over the past five years?</p>	<p>Y <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>N <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>7.8 Has the number of new business licences been stable or growing over the past five years?</p>	<p>Y <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>N <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>7.9 Is there a range of businesses operating in your municipality (i.e., variety in size and sectors)?</p>	<p>Y <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>N <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>7.10 Does your municipality expect that these businesses will provide stable employment in the community the long term?</p>	<p>Y <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>N <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

### Community Vitality

<p>7.11 Is there a strong sense of pride in the community?</p>	<p>Y <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>N <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
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7.12	Does your council actively lead or support activities to foster community pride and celebrate community?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
7.13	Are there public facilities in the community for recreation, community meetings and social gatherings?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	i. If yes, who owns and operates these facilities?  _____  _____  _____			
	ii. Are these facilities self-sustaining?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
7.14	Are strong local volunteer organizations active within the municipality?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

## 8. RISK MANAGEMENT

### Risk Identification/ Management of Risks

8.1	Has the municipality conducted a Corporate Risk Assessment?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
8.2	If yes, does the municipality have a Corporate Risk Mitigation Plan?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

### Risk Assessment/Planning

8.3	Is funding set aside for unexpected emergencies?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
8.4	Does your municipality have a municipal service/corporation continuity plan in place?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
8.5	Are appropriate emergency management plans in place?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
8.6	Are plans or strategies in place to manage the loss of critical community resources such as labour or loss of major industries?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
8.7	Does the municipality have plans in place to address environmental risks (e.g., reclamation plan)?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

8.8	Does your municipal fire department and/or service provider provide the level of emergency service as determined by your council, and meet any applicable provincial standards?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
8.9	Does your municipality ensure that provincial safety standards (e.g., Safety Codes requirements, Occupational Health and Safety, etc.) are adhered to?	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	

## INTERPRETING THE RESULTS OF YOUR SELF-ASSESSMENT

### We have answered the questions. Now what do we do?

In an ideal world, each municipality would have answers to each question that would indicate a viable and sustainable municipality. However, in reality, it is likely that most municipalities will find that some areas of the survey do not reflect this. This is not necessarily a problem; in most instances, it simply indicates an area where the municipality may have room to improve its performance. The issue becomes one of identifying how to move forward to address weaknesses and build on strengths. While every municipality has different circumstances, and different priorities, in general terms, the following outlines how the results of the questionnaire might be interpreted.

- **Responses in all eight subject areas supporting a viable and sustainable municipality** probably indicate that the municipality has the political, financial and community resources to continue to operate effectively and may also benefit from exploring some of the capacity building tools.
- **A relatively balanced mix of responses in some or all subject areas that would support a viable and sustainable municipality** most likely means that there are issues that need to be addressed by council through the appropriate capacity building tools provided in the Capacity Building Toolkit (see “Creating an Action Plan” below).
- **Responses in all eight subject areas** that would tend towards a non-viable or unsustainable municipality would suggest that the local government may no longer be capable of functioning effectively. Municipal viability is at risk, and as the issues appear to run deeper than can be addressed through application of the tools in the Capacity Building Toolkit.
  - As well, **consistent positive** responses to the questions regarding the **key sustainability measures** used by the Government of Alberta, as denoted by an asterisk (\*) in the questionnaire, and **consistent negative** responses regarding **legislated requirements**, as indicated by double asterisks (\*\*) in the questionnaire, lead to the same conclusion.
  - In these circumstances you should contact Municipal Affairs and/or your association for further action and direction regarding what options are available.

## CREATING AN ACTION PLAN

### Your Municipal Viability and Sustainability Picture – What do you do?

Now that your municipality has worked through the questionnaire and evaluated its responses, you should have a much better understanding of your municipality’s “viability and sustainability” picture; where your municipality’s strengths lie and what challenges you may face. But before any plan of action can be started, you first have to ensure that you have the interest and the commitment of your municipality to create and follow through with this action plan.

The next step is to look at your municipality’s evaluation and focus on any of the areas where deficiencies have been identified. You may want to only focus on a few key areas; you may decide on an ambitious plan to tackle all of the deficiencies. Deciding what approach to take and setting goals can be a difficult process. Sitting down with council, inviting the public to share the results of the questionnaire and obtain their feedback,

contacting your relevant association, or asking Municipal Affairs for their assistance are all options in helping identify priority areas and establishing meaningful goals.

Once your municipality has identified the areas it would like to work on, a good place to go would be the Capacity Building Toolkit, which is available on the Municipal Affairs website at <http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/1330.cfm>. The inventory provides a list of capacity building tools currently offered by Municipal Affairs, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA), the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC), and other municipal associations and municipally-related entities, for each of the eight broad subject areas. The application of these capacity-building resources may assist the municipality in overcoming many of the deficiencies identified through the questionnaire. You may want to contact your municipal association to discuss which capacity building tools they offer that might be beneficial or applicable.

Although the inventory is very thorough and comprehensive, there may be challenges that are best addressed through more collaboration with your neighbouring municipalities, with Municipal Affairs, or with the AUMA or AAMDC. Relevant options include:

- Informal service sharing;
- Intermunicipal services sharing or co-operation agreements;
- Regional service commissions; and
- Municipal restructuring.

### **Follow-up and monitoring - How do we know when things are working?**

Maintaining municipal sustainability is an ongoing dynamic process. As mentioned, a critical part of any action plan is the establishment of realistic and meaningful goals. Some of these goals may be quantifiable, with targets that are clearly defined, straightforward and easy to measure. Examples of such goals (to list but a few) might include:

- ensuring compliance with legislated requirements by making a checklist of all legislated requirements as per the MGA;
- setting a goal of reducing short term debt by a set percentage over a twelve month period;
- adopting, following and reviewing procedural plans within a predetermined period of time; and
- reviewing municipal service levels to ensure they are consistent with community priorities, any legislated standards, and are within the municipality's financial capacity.

Other goals though are more qualitative in nature and are not as easily measured. It can be challenging to accurately or formally measure such items as citizen satisfaction, citizen engagement, or the level of community pride. But whether or not they are easily measured, these aspects are nevertheless vital to municipal viability and sustainability. Most municipal councils have a reasonable awareness of the general state of these community characteristics, and whether they are trending in a positive or negative direction. Options for formalizing and reinforcing this understanding might include activities like the following:

- Adopting and following a formal citizen engagement plan;
- Conducting periodic citizen satisfaction surveys; and
- Working with volunteer community groups to identify opportunities for collaboration.

In addition, some municipalities may wish to complete this questionnaire on a regularly scheduled basis (for example, every 3-5 years), to monitor their progress in achieving and maintaining short-term viability and long-term sustainability.