

Town of Morinville Municipal Sustainability Plan Draft Environmental Scan

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Executive Summary

“Sustainable development” (or “sustainability”) is a simple idea that has significant implications for how we live our lives and make decisions as individuals, businesses and communities. It’s most common and widely accepted definition is “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*” Acting on sustainability generally involves adopting the following key principles:

- Long term planning;
- Community engagement and partnership;
- Integration;
- Multiple bottom lines; and
- Living within environmental limits.

All municipalities in Alberta are required to develop a Municipal Sustainability Plan (MSP) in order to access federal funding under the gas tax agreement. Municipal sustainability planning is an opportunity for communities to look long-term at the community they want and take the proactive steps to move there. It is an opportunity to engage citizens in a dialogue about what they value about their communities and what they want their community to look like in the future.

The Town of Morinville is developing a MSP that will articulate a 25-year vision for the community and incorporate the principles listed above. Morinville’s approach to sustainability is grounded in six pillars that reflect the community’s diverse assets and key priorities:

Governance	Defined in terms of municipal election processes, the Town’s capacity to manage resources and develop and implement sound public policy, and the mechanisms through which citizens and groups engage and interact with Council, the administration and each other. <i>Key pillar action areas include Civic Engagement, Sound Management, Accountable Leadership, Customer Service, and Land-Use & Community Planning.</i>
Cultural	Defined in terms of the shared values and cultural and recreational activities that reflect the diverse traditions, customs, values, heritage, identity and history of the Town. <i>Key pillar action areas include: Arts and Heritage, Recreation & Leisure, and Cultural Diversity & Identity</i>
Social	Defined in terms of the health, wellbeing, safety and quality of life of individuals, families and the community. <i>Key pillar action areas include: Liveability & Quality of life, Health & Wellbeing, Public Safety & Security, Community Services & Programs, and Affordability.</i>

- Economic** Defined in terms of achieving economic growth and development that simultaneously improves our quality of life and the environment. It includes employment and income levels and the health, quality and diversity of employers and businesses in the community.
- Key pillar action areas include: Economic Planning & Wellbeing, Local Businesses, Local Food, and Tourism.*
- Infrastructure** Defined in terms of the state of the built environment and the services that support it.
- Key pillar action areas include: Mobility & Transportation, Green Buildings & Public Facilities, Solid Waste Management, Water & Wastewater Management, Energy and Technology & Communication.*
- Environmental** Defined in terms of the health, quality, diversity and abundance of local (and global) ecosystems and the services that they provide to the community.
- Key pillar action areas include: Green Spaces & Ecosystem Health, Air Quality, Climate Change, Lighter Ecological Footprint.*

Albertan communities are facing a wide range of social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities that are driven by both local and external factors. Increasingly, global issues – from the 2009 financial crises to climate change – are having significant impacts on local government. As part of the municipal sustainability planning process, the Town conducted an environmental scan to identify current issues and trends relevant to municipal sustainability planning. Morinville identified eleven key issues for which a light scan was completed and five key issues (denoted by an *) for which a more detailed scan was completed:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Happiness and Quality of Life* | 7. Changing Local Government and Citizen Expectations |
| 2. Demographic Shifts and Vulnerable Populations* | 8. Globalization and Economic Change |
| 3. Equity and Affordability* | 9. Transportation and Mobility |
| 4. Energy Consumption and Peak Oil* | 10. Built Environment and Housing |
| 5. Climate Change* | 11. Ecological Health |
| 6. Public Health and Community Safety | |

Key findings for each issue are captured in this report and will be used to shape and inform the direction and issues pursued in the MSP.

When undergoing municipal sustainability planning, every community needs to adapt its approach to reflect community priorities and the local and global context. The following provides a brief overview of five key considerations based on the Environmental Scan:

- **Happiness and Quality of Life:** Municipalities have the responsibility to ensure that citizens' basic needs are met and that they live in an environment that provides the best possible quality of life. Ensuring that adequate housing, social, recreational and infrastructure services are available are key to meeting residents' needs.
- **Demographic Shifts and Vulnerable Populations:** Municipalities across Canada are increasing in cultural diversity while their populations are aging. Local governments will need to respond to these shifts and ensure that they are providing services that reflect the diversity of interests and needs in their community. This may involve addressing issues such as accessibility, language training, cultural awareness, health services and skills training for residents.
- **Equity and Affordability:** Communities are challenged by high levels of personal and government debt, economic transitions and increasing income gaps among residents. Municipalities can help to overcome these issues by planning and developing services and infrastructure to accommodate a range of incomes (e.g. affordable housing) and by working with residents to stimulate and develop the local economy.
- **Energy Consumption and Peak Oil:** Conventional oil production has peaked in North America, a situation that is also the case in Alberta. The rising price of oil has made non-conventional energy sources, such as renewable energy and Alberta's oil sands, economically viable. The oil sands support thousands of jobs and create wealth for surrounding communities; however, they have also been the source of considerable debate due to their regional environmental impact and contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. Municipalities can respond to these issues through community energy and economic planning to diversify their energy sources and reduce their economic dependency on fossil fuel industries.
- **Climate Change:** There is a global scientific consensus that the climate is changing and that these changes are linked to human activities. Municipalities have two roles to play in addressing climate change at the community level: 1) through adapting to changing climatic conditions, and 2) by mitigating further GHG emissions. Adaptive measures promote planning and capacity building that will allow for communities to adjust to the potential impacts that are expected to occur. Mitigation efforts seek to reduce GHG emissions at the community level in order to avoid accelerating the effects of climate change.

As Morinville develops its MSP it will draw on its knowledge of its current reality (local context, assets and issues) and identifying priorities, objectives, actions and strategies to move towards its desired future. The Environmental Scan identified a number of assets and issues that are relevant for the MSP and are summarized in the table below.

PILLAR	ASSETS	KEY ISSUES
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service delivery and town administration - Fiscal responsibility - Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citizen engagement - Planning and policy documents - Citizen expectations
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Festivals and events - Arts, culture and heritage infrastructure - Community program offering - Recreational facilities and services - Community connectedness built around culture - Aesthetics and public spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diversity - Service and program offering - Resources - Facilities and spaces - Aesthetics - Distinct identity

PILLAR	ASSETS	KEY ISSUES
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality of life - Public safety and security - Education - Social support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land use - Limited budget and jurisdictional complexity
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Town management - Facilities and space - Business and economic development - Location - Economic vitality - Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tax base diversification - Facilities and space - Local and small businesses - Local employment opportunities - Constraints on industrial growth
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water infrastructure - Mobility and transportation - Facilities - Town staff - Waste disposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land - Aging infrastructure - Facilities - Skills
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urban vegetation and wildlife - Local environmental stewardship programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness and education - Resource utilization - Industrial activity - Clean transportation options - Planning and policy documents

1 Introduction

The Town of Morinville is developing a Municipal Sustainability Plan (MSP) that will articulate a 25-year vision for the community. As part of the planning process, the Town engaged Stratos Inc., a sustainability consulting firm, to conduct an environmental scan to identify current issues and trends relevant to municipal sustainability planning. Stratos worked closely with Town staff members to complete the scan. The key findings are captured in this report and will be used to shape and inform the direction and issues pursued in the MSP.

The primary function of the environmental scan is to build awareness about relevant sustainability issues and share background information that has been gathered on Morinville's current reality. It provides a snapshot of key issues at this point in time and will be shared with the various stakeholders who will contribute to the development of the MSP. It builds on the information collected during the development of Morinville's 2010 *Community Consultation towards a Municipal Sustainability Plan* report. Components of the environmental scan may be included in the final MSP to help build awareness more broadly across the community on sustainability issues and trends.

The target audience for the environmental scan is the Town Council, Town Administration and interested community members and stakeholders who will participate in the planning and implementation process. The final MSP will be a living, community-owned document and these stakeholders are therefore essential partners for the development, implementation and ongoing stewardship of the plan.

The Environmental Scan Report is organized according to the following sections:

Sustainability in Municipalities – A description of what sustainability is and the role that municipalities play in sustainability planning.

Impediments to Sustainability – Identification of some the key challenges and barriers to implementing sustainability at the municipal level.

Imperatives for Sustainability – A light description of some of the most important sustainability issues facing municipalities and a detailed description of a subset of those issues of greatest importance to Morinville.

Current Morinville Reality – A description of Morinville's current context, assets and issues for each of Morinville's six sustainability pillars: governance, cultural, social, economic, infrastructure and environmental.

2 Sustainability in Municipalities

“The future is not something we enter. The future is something we create.”

Leopold L. Sweet, Author/Futurist

“Sustainable development” (or “sustainability”) is a simple idea that has significant implications for how we live our lives and make decisions as individuals, businesses and communities. Its most common and widely accepted definition is “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*”¹

Sustainability invites us to create the best community (and world) we can for ourselves, our neighbours, and future generations. It challenges us to live our lives and make decisions as individuals, organizations and societies in a way that ensures future generations have access to the same (or better!) opportunities and quality of life than we do now.²

Sustainability Principles

Sustainability is based on a fundamental value that is common to most (if not all) Albertans: *our children and our grandchildren (i.e. future generations) are at least as valuable and important as we are, and deserve at least the same opportunities that we have.* If you care about what kind of world your children and your grandchildren will live in, or if you care about your community and what it will look like in the future, then you care about sustainability.

Acting on sustainability generally involves adopting the following key principles:³

- **Long term planning:** In order to achieve sustainability, communities have to establish a long-term vision (i.e. 25 years or more) to guide short-term planning and decision-making.
- **Community engagement and partnership:** Integrated long-term planning is ongoing, iterative and participatory. The successful implementation of a sustainability plan is dependent on the active collaboration of local government, community leaders and other partners and stakeholders.
- **Integration:** Cities tend to manage various systems such as water, transportation, waste and energy on separate tracks. In reality, these systems are best understood by looking at how the community functions as a whole. This allows us to identify and address the root causes of our problems rather than simply applying band-aid solutions. Long-term sustainability requires aligning plans and departments and managing them in an integrated fashion.
- **Multiple bottom lines:** Social, economic and environmental issues are sometimes presented as mutually exclusive tradeoffs, such as the argument that a community has to choose between building its economy or protecting the environment. Sustainability challenges us to turn this perspective around and focus on solutions that maximize the social, economic and environmental benefits of every project and decision.
- **Living within environmental limits:** Human health and economic well-being are fundamentally dependent on the resources and services provided by the natural environment.⁴ Consequently, communities have to ensure that their vision and activities fit within the capacity of local, regional and global environments.

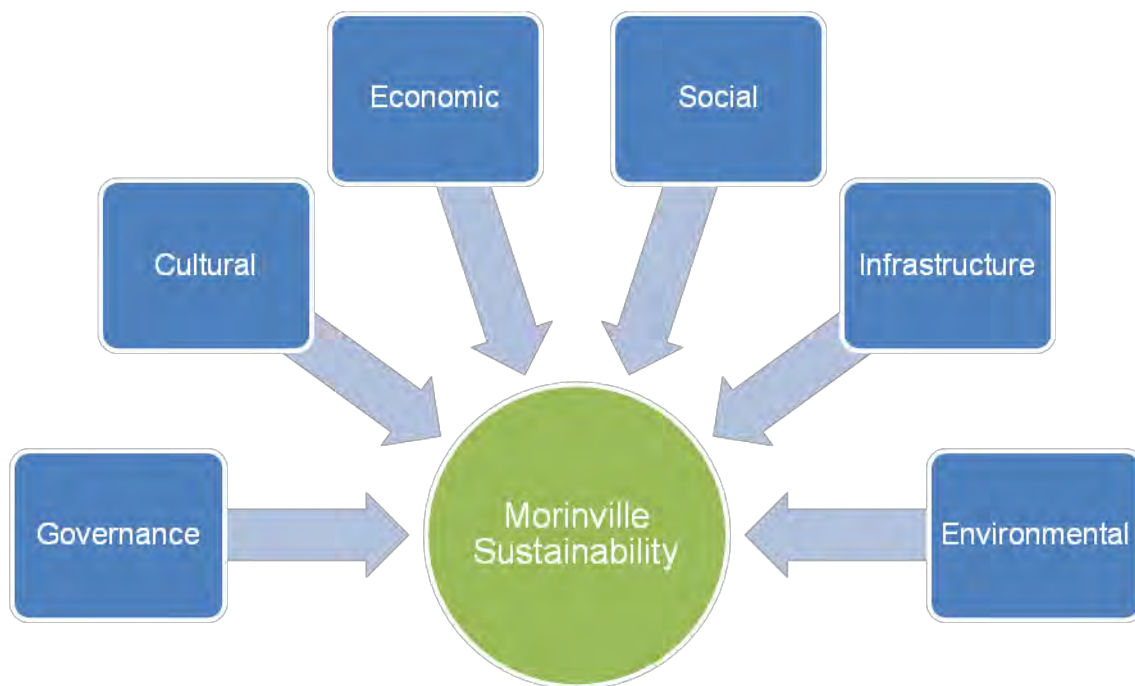
If you think this sounds challenging, then you're not alone. The important thing to remember is that sustainability is an ideal, just like "justice" or "equality". We may never be able to create a perfectly safe or just community, but it doesn't mean that the ideal of justice isn't worth fighting for. Like many other important ideas, sustainability provides an ideal to strive for that is firmly grounded in Alberta's values and way of life.

Morinville's Approach

Morinville is developing an MSP that reflects the principles above. The final MSP will be a long-term plan that will guide planning and decision-making throughout the community.

Morinville's approach to sustainability is grounded in six pillars that represent the diverse assets of the community: governance, cultural, social, economic, environmental and infrastructure. These pillars should not be thought of as competing priorities but rather as key elements that should be considered and optimized in every decision.

Figure 1: Morinville's Six Sustainability Pillars



A definition of each pillar is provided in the table below.

Table 1: Morinville Pillar Definitions and Action Plans

PILLAR	DEFINITION
GOVERNANCE	Defined in terms of municipal election processes, the Town’s capacity to manage resources and develop and implement sound public policy, and the mechanisms through which citizens and groups engage and interact with Council, the administration and each other. Governance looks at how both local government (Council, administration) and community stakeholders (individuals, businesses, other organizations) engage in planning and decision-making
CULTURAL	Defined in terms of the shared values and cultural and recreational activities that reflect the diverse traditions, customs, values, heritage, identity and history of the Town. These provide a source of social cohesion; a sense of community, a repository of shared values, and a source of inspiration, innovation and creativity that enhance and support individual and community quality of life, spirit, pride and engagement.
SOCIAL	Defined in terms of the health, wellbeing, safety and quality of life of individuals, families and the community. It is grounded in the diverse relationships in the community, levels of mutual trust, respect and civic engagement, and the skills, education and knowledge of individuals and organizations.
ECONOMIC	Defined in terms of achieving economic growth and development that simultaneously improves our quality of life and the environment. It includes employment and income levels and the health, quality and diversity of employers and businesses in the community. Economic activity defines the unique character of the community, provides work opportunities for residents and generates revenue for the municipality.

2.1 THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES IN SUSTAINABILITY

Municipalities across Canada and around the world are leading global efforts towards sustainability. From the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association to the World Mayor's Council on Climate Change, municipalities have made bold commitments to improve the long term social, economic and environmental health of their communities.

This leadership makes sense because municipalities are the level of government most affected by sustainability issues and are also well placed to engage community members and address these issues. However they have jurisdictional and fiscal limitations that may not be well understood by community members. In particular, smaller communities earn less revenue than larger communities, but residents still may expect them to address the full range of issues that are usually considered under the umbrella of sustainability.

Given this context, this section provides a brief overview of what municipalities do and the role of municipal sustainability planning in shaping their future.

What do municipalities do?

In Alberta, the *Municipal Government Act* identifies three primary purposes of municipalities:

1. To provide good government.
2. To provide services, facilities or other things that, in the opinion of council, are necessary or desirable for all or a part of the municipality.
3. To develop safe and viable communities.

Municipal councils are empowered to undertake a variety of activities and actions within their jurisdiction (as stated in provincial statutes and regulations). Morinville's key action areas are presented in the table below, grouped under each of the six pillars.

Table 2: Morinville Sustainability Action Areas by Pillar

GOVERNANCE ACTION AREAS
Civic Engagement Including voter turnout, levels of civic involvement in Morinville planning and decision-making, and collaborative activities with local organizations to implement community priorities.
Sound Management Including fiscal responsibility and effective asset, human resources and financial management practices.
Accountable Leadership Including the quality, transparency and accountability of elected officials, municipal staff and community leaders.
Customer Service Including the level and quality of service and timely and appropriate access to information.
Land-Use and Community Planning Including long-range and strategic planning policies that influence development and support the creation of a complete, sustainable community.

CULTURAL ACTION AREAS

Arts and Heritage

Including arts facilities, heritage buildings, and the quality and diversity of artisans, activities, events and public spaces.

Recreation and Leisure

Including recreational services and infrastructure, access to public spaces, active living and sports activities.

Cultural Diversity and Identity

Including programs, services and events that celebrate Morinville's identity with residents and neighbours from First Nations and diverse cultures.

SOCIAL ACTION AREAS

Liveability and Quality of life

Including the various elements that make Morinville an inclusive, welcoming community and a desirable place to live.

Health and Wellbeing

Including health promotion and disease prevention and active community lifestyles.

Public Safety and Security

Including crime prevention, community safety and security, and emergency planning and services.

Community Services and Programs

Including programs that support civic engagement, improve accessibility, support education and lifelong learning, and work to meet the needs of the whole community (including youth, elderly and vulnerable populations).

Affordability

Including programs, services and organizations that address the affordability of housing, food and other services.

ECONOMIC ACTION AREAS

Economic Planning and Wellbeing

Including employment levels, the diversity of employers and employment opportunities, regional partnerships, green industry, and economic development planning.

Local Businesses

Including programs that support the retention, development, greening and expansion of local businesses and organizations (commercial, industrial, not-for-profit).

Local Food

Including food security and the promotion of local food production and consumption (e.g. farmers markets).

Tourism

Including local attractions and activities and the services/businesses that support tourism, such as hotels, restaurants and the downtown core.

INFRASTRUCTURE ACTION AREAS

Mobility and Transportation

Including all the elements that support the movement of goods and people such as roads, public transport, and cycling/walking networks.

Green Buildings and Public Facilities

Including public facilities and consideration of green and accessible infrastructure.

Solid Waste Management

Including solid, hazardous and other waste streams, recycling and reuse programs.

Water and Wastewater Management

Including drinking water quality, water consumption and the management and treatment of wastewater and stormwater.

Energy

Including energy use, energy security, renewable energy and sustainable community energy planning.

Technology and Communications

Including access to key technology infrastructure such as telecommunications.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION AREAS

Green Spaces and Ecosystem health

Including the management of public green spaces (parks, recreational spaces) and protected areas to support ecosystem integrity and biodiversity.

Air Quality

Including smog, particulate and other air emissions.

Climate Change

Including green house gas emissions management and adaptation to changing climatic conditions.

Lighter Ecological Footprint

Including programs for tracking and reducing the environmental impacts of Morinville's resource use, such as municipal procurement practices and green business programs.

Ultimately, municipal councils are responsible for establishing programs that residents need and want within their fiscal means and responsibility. However, it is important to note that for many issues that municipalities address, provincial and federal governments also have overlapping jurisdiction. For example with water resources, municipalities are typically responsible for drinking water treatment, distribution and wastewater treatment; however provinces are responsible for water allocation, watershed management and protection and the Federal government for the management of boundary waters and fisheries. Recently, there has been a trend of the federal government and provinces to download greater responsibility to municipalities without providing sufficient funding.

How do municipalities pay for what they do?

Property tax is the main source (and in some cases the only source) of revenue for many municipalities. The tax rate is set on an annual basis. In Alberta, tax rates can be established for each of four assessment classes: residential, non-residential, farmland, and machinery and equipment. The revenue that a given municipality can generate is therefore dependent on the size of its tax base and is thus proportional to the size of the community.

In addition to property tax, a municipality may acquire additional revenue through:

- Other taxes (e.g., a business tax, a special tax, a local improvement tax, a business revitalization zone tax or a well drilling equipment tax);
- User fees (e.g., for utility charges for water, sewer treatment, recreation, facility use, garbage collection, etc.);
- Other fees (e.g. for licenses and permits); or
- Conditional grants (i.e., provided by the provincial and federal governments for certain activities if a municipality meets certain conditions, often on a cost shared basis).

What is the role of a municipal sustainability plan?

All municipalities in Alberta are required to develop an MSP in order to access federal funding under the gas tax agreement. Municipal sustainability planning is an opportunity for communities to look long-term at the community they want and take the proactive steps to move there. It is an opportunity to engage citizens in a dialogue about what they value about their communities and what they want their community to look like in the future.

An important aspect of sustainability planning is that it is holistic and covers the full range of community outcomes that are of interest to its citizens. This includes elements (such as health, education and the delivery of day care and other social programs) that lie outside of the municipality's direct control or jurisdiction. Consequently, it is essential that an MSP is a community owned document that establishes local organizations, businesses and citizens as partners in its development and implementation.

The Town of Morinville has developed a strategic planning framework that shows how the MSP relates to other planning activities in the community (Figure 2 below). It presents the MSP as the highest level planning document that sets the direction for all of the Town's corporate and community plans and policies. As a community-owned document, it will also provide guidance for plans developed by other community organizations.

The MSP will present a clear vision for Morinville in 2035, establish long-term goals and priorities and include a set of measures and targets to track the community's progress towards sustainability. As a long-term plan it will focus primarily on the outcomes that are important to community members (such as safe streets and clean water) rather than on the specific actions to get there. Ideas for strategies and actions will be identified during the MSP process and then integrated into the Town's other plans and processes, such as the three-year strategic plan.

Figure 2: Town of Morinville Strategic Planning Framework



3 Impediments to Sustainability

Community sustainability planning is inherently complex and cuts across departmental, jurisdictional and geographical boundaries. Acting on sustainability requires that we challenge many basic assumptions about how we design and build communities, produce and consume food and material goods, and plan and make decisions. Fundamentally, implementing sustainability requires changing a number of existing attitudes, ways of thinking and patterns of behaviour.

As with any change initiative, there are a number of barriers that must be overcome. This section presents eight common barriers to implementing sustainability in municipalities and outlines some of the best practices for overcoming those barriers.⁵

Barrier #1: Entrenched attitudes and approaches can create Individual and organizational “inertia” and resistance to change. The presence of skeptics about the need for sustainability or the need for a different approach in an organization may act as a significant barrier, in particular if they are in senior positions.

Barrier #2: The lack of a compelling shared vision that clearly articulates what is to be achieved and how success will be measured. For sustainability, it is critical that this vision is shared and endorsed by both municipal staff and community leaders.

Barrier #3: Inconsistent levels of municipal and community ownership and commitment that send mixed messages to staff and community members and impede implementation activities; for example, senior management approving a plan and then failing to allocate resources or report on it.

Barrier #4: Lack of information and understanding of what sustainability is, why it’s important, what the municipality’s approach to it is, and the roles and responsibilities for implementing it both within the community and among the municipal staff. This includes issues with general outreach and communication as well as technical competencies for integrating sustainability into planning and decision-making.

Barrier #5: Hierarchical and segregated (or “silo”) structures and approaches to planning and decision-making, particularly if sustainability is set up as a stand-alone program or department. These approaches can create barriers through i) disempowering staff or community members from taking ownership or initiative, ii) creating barriers to communication and collaboration, iii) limiting innovation, and iv) missing opportunities for efficiencies through integration within and among departments.

Barrier #6: Failure to institutionalize sustainability into management structures, processes and tools. Many organizations commit to sustainability but fail to integrate it into everyday procedures, policies and culture as well as individual and organizational performance metrics. This can create mismatched priorities, disincentives and a lack of accountability.

Barrier #7: Time and resources can be a significant barrier, particularly for municipalities that are already challenged to deliver existing programs and services. In the short-term there can be also be significant transition “soft costs” to educating staff and stakeholders in order to harness the longer-term benefits of sustainability.

Barrier #8: External factors and systems, including political and economic trends and jurisdictional issues that are outside of the municipality's direct control.

These barriers can be addressed through adopting a number of best practices to guide sustainability planning and implementation, such as: ⁶

1. **Creating a shared understanding** of sustainability among elected officials, staff and stakeholders,
2. **Clearly establishing sustainability as a corporate priority** both internally and externally,
3. **Developing a clear, measurable and inspiring vision**,
4. **Building momentum and trust** through transparent and accountable decision-making, performance management and reporting,
5. **Constantly and persistently communicating** the sustainability need, vision and priorities, including establishing sustainability outreach and training programs for stakeholders and staff that build general knowledge and technical competency,
6. **Establishing a credible home for sustainability** within the organization vested with appropriate levels of influence and decision-making authority and establishing cross-cutting, interdepartmental teams to support sustainability analysis and implementation,
7. **Aligning new and existing policies** with sustainability objectives, priorities and principles and reviewing the full-range of options for integrating sustainability into internal policies and practices, from human resource planning to budget processes,
8. **Proactively identifying and partnering with sustainability leaders and champions** within the corporation, in the broader community, and outside of the municipality in order to build momentum and critical mass, and
9. **Taking early action** that builds on existing assets, plans and activities in order to build momentum, demonstrate commitment and pilot new approaches.

These barriers and best practices highlight the importance of taking a strategic, proactive approach to municipal sustainability planning. They also emphasize the important role that community stakeholders play in developing and implementing an MSP. The Town of Morinville is committed to taking a leadership role in sustainability and has integrated a number of these best practices into its MSP process.

4 Imperatives for Sustainability

Albertan communities are facing a wide range of social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities that are driven by both local and external factors. Increasingly, global issues – from the 2009 financial crises to climate change – are having significant impacts on local government. This section presents a brief overview of number of global, national and regional issues that are related to sustainability and that are relevant for the Town of Morinville. It is presented in three parts:

- Why sustainability matters
- A scan of relevant issues
- Exploration of key issues for Morinville

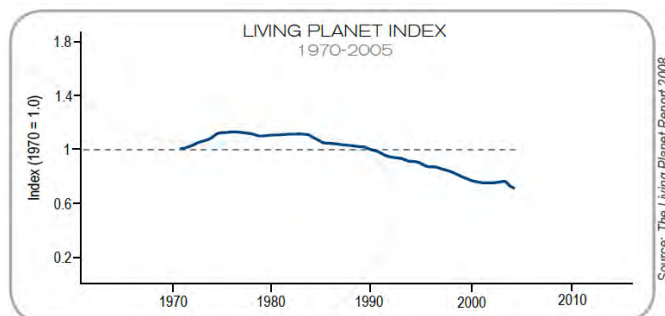
4.1 WHY SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

The need to shift towards more sustainable forms of development is largely driven by a growing concern about the decline of environmental systems and the consequences for economic and human development. It is clear that the past century has brought extraordinary improvements in human health and medicine, public education, and material well being. There is a global consensus, however, among world leaders, scientists and other experts that these improvements have come at a tremendous cost to our environment and communities⁷. At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development the world's leaders identified the following key challenges facing our world⁸:

- the decline of the global environment from habitat destruction, pollution and resource consumption,
- the increasing gap between rich and poor driven in part by the uneven distribution of the benefits and costs of globalization, and
- current patterns of production and consumption, such as energy consumption and waste production.

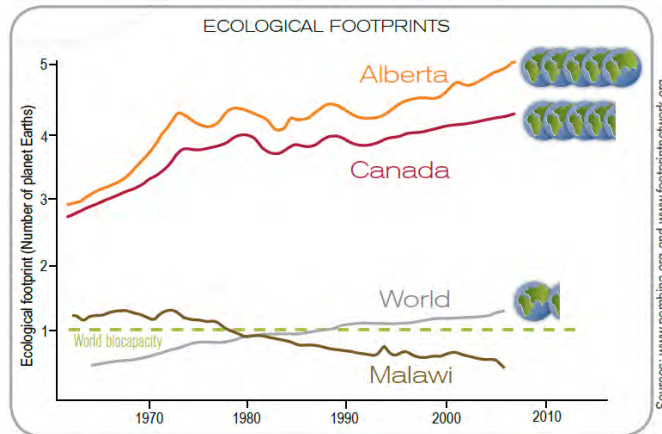
The evidence of these problems is compelling and is well documented.⁹ Based on current trends, human society as a whole will demand twice as many resources than our planet can support by the mid 2030s.¹⁰ The consequence of living beyond the planet's means is that ecosystems are being run down, resources are disappearing and waste is accumulating in the air, land and water. The resulting impacts – such as water shortages and desertification – are putting the well-being and development of all nations at risk. The problem isn't simply that we are consuming too much, but that the rate of consumption is systematically increasing every year.¹¹ These issues are illustrated in the two figures below taken from The Natural Step Canada's *Sustainability Primer*.

Figure 3: State of the World's Ecosystems as measured by the Living Planet Index¹²



At a national level, Canadians are among the most privileged people on the planet. If everyone on earth consumed resources the way the average Canadian does today, we would need more than four planets to support ourselves. In contrast, if the world lived like the average person in Haiti or Malawi, humanity would be using only a quarter of the planet's biological capacity.¹³ Clearly, the balance lies somewhere in between these two examples.

Figure 4: Levels of human consumption as measured by global and national Ecological Footprints¹⁴



Sustainability has been endorsed by leaders at all levels of government as a framework for addressing these issues and reversing these trends. The good news is that we already have all of the key knowledge and technology needed to address these challenges and dramatically reduce our environmental impact without impacting our quality of life. The first step is deciding to take a leadership position and work towards developing communities that support a healthy and thriving environment, economy and society.

4.2 SCAN OF RELEVANT ISSUES

This section provides a high level scan of different issues that are relevant for sustainability. It is intended to provide an overview of the diversity of ideas and trends that impact municipal sustainability planning. There are many other important issues that are also relevant and are not included here, however, these eleven provide a solid foundation for starting the conversation and engaging in the planning process.

4.2.1 Happiness and Quality of Life

Happiness and quality of life are essential elements for determining the health of the community and its attractiveness to those living outside the community. Both are related to meeting individual's basic human needs. Generally, there are nine fundamental human needs which are considered to be universal across all cultures and historical time periods. They are: subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity and freedom.¹⁵

The determinants of happiness and the determinants of quality of life can be quite different. Quality of life is measured in a variety of ways, incorporating data from the social, physical and economic environment in which people live (examples: health, housing and security). Happiness is more challenging to measure as it is driven by individuals' perception that their needs are being met and can vary according to individual or group.

Municipalities have the responsibility to ensure that citizens' basic needs are met and that they live in an environment that provides a reasonable quality of life. Ensuring that adequate housing, recreational and infrastructure services are provided can help communities meet their needs.

4.2.2 Demographic Shifts and Vulnerable Populations

Canada's population is aging: Canadians are living longer on average, and the "baby boomer" generation is gradually shifting into older age brackets. Due to the increase in average age, Canada's population is expected to become more reliant on healthcare and home support services in the future. To account for this shift in demographics, local governments have identified a need to examine existing infrastructure and services to ensure that they will be able to provide adequate support to residents in the future.¹⁶

Immigration has become the major source of Canada's growth in population. Between 2001 and 2006, Canada's population grew by 5.4%, attributed entirely to immigration¹⁷ and it is expected that visible minorities will account for 20% of the population by 2017. The First Nations population in Canada has also grown at a higher rate than the rest of the Canadian population, reaching 1.2 million people in 2006¹⁸. As municipalities across Canada become more diverse or further integrated with existing communities (such as First Nation communities), local governments will need to find ways to incorporate a variety of interests and values, and to ensure that they are providing services that reflect the diversity of their community. In some cases, local governments may need to increasingly address language, employment and skills capacity among residents.

4.2.3 Equity and Affordability

The benefits of consumption are not distributed evenly. The richest 200 people in the world have a combined annual income that is greater than that of the poorest 2.5 billion people.¹⁹ Income disparity in Canada has been steadily increasing for several decades. After adjusting for inflation, the top 20% of income earners experienced a 37% increase in their annual after-tax income between 1976 and 2007, while the lowest 20% remained at the same level, relatively. Unemployment in Canada has reached 8.1% nationally²⁰ and further impacts issues of affordability. In Alberta, families in the top 20% had an income of 8.9 times higher than those families in the bottom 20% in 2007²¹. The gap between families in the top and bottom income brackets can be a measure of equity within a community.

Canadian municipalities are now facing a significant infrastructure deficit. Studies on the municipal infrastructure deficit range from \$60 to \$125 billion²², illustrating that Canadian cities are not able to afford much needed investments in local infrastructure projects. Over the past 20 years, federal and provincial responsibilities have been devolved to municipal governments, often without adequate resources to address them, creating greater deficits for local governments.²³

Municipalities can help to address equity and affordability issues in their communities by planning and developing services and infrastructure that will accommodate the ranges of incomes (e.g., by offering a variety of affordable housing options) and by working with residents to stimulate and develop the local economy.

4.2.4 Energy Consumption and Peak Oil

To date, energy supply in North America has been based largely on fossil fuels. For years the exploration and production of oil and gas reserves has been on the rise due to the increase in

demand for energy. However, fossil fuels are a non-renewable resource and therefore their supply is ultimately limited resulting in considerable debate as to when (and if) global consumption will exceed the supply that is available. This has led to increased interest in the issue of “peak oil” which is based on the idea that global oil extraction will eventually reach a “peak” or maximum rate, following which global production will decrease and the price of oil will increase.²⁴ Although the debate about peak oil remains and the exact implications are uncertain, the concept raises considerations for energy security and prices which could impact municipalities. For example, increasing energy prices would likely result in rises in transportation, facility operations and food costs. The concept of peak oil has also created an incentive to develop alternative energy sources. Renewable energy, nuclear power and biofuels are examples of alternatives to fossil fuels. Growth in the production of these alternative sources is either underway or being considered in various regions across Canada.

Conventional oil production has peaked in North America already, a situation that is also the case in Alberta. The rising price of oil has made non-conventional energy sources, such as Alberta’s oil sands a viable source for extraction. The oil sands support thousands of jobs and create wealth for surrounding communities. Many people have moved to Alberta to fill the growing demand in labour force that has resulted from the growth in production. New industries and local businesses are benefiting from the economic boom of oil sands production, and increased tax revenue has resulted in better government programs and grants. However, the oil sands have also been the source of considerable conflict and debate due to their regional environmental impact and contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

Municipalities have a role to play in managing and planning for their community’s energy needs. A community energy plan can help guide municipalities in their understanding and evaluation of land use, building design, energy systems, infrastructure and waste management in the context of a sustainable energy future. This type of planning can help ensure that a community’s energy demands will be met in the future and in a sustainable manner. A community energy plan builds resilient communities that can grow their economy and meet environmental and social goals.²⁵

4.2.5 Climate Change

Climate change (or global warming) is a topic that is frequently in the media and is often misunderstood. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) represents thousands of scientists from around the world and has been studying changes in the climate over the past thousands of years. They have concluded global temperatures are rising due to increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere and that human activity is the most likely cause of this increase. It is important to note that climate and weather are not the same: weather describes atmospheric conditions (e.g. cloud cover, temperature) over a short period of time, whereas climate describes trends over relatively long periods of time.²⁶

The IPCC research indicates that all regions across the globe will experience significant negative impacts if the global temperature increases more than 2-3°C.²⁷ How much and how quickly the Earth’s temperature will increase remains unknown given the uncertainty of future greenhouse gas, aerosol emissions and the Earth’s response to changing conditions; however, the IPCC research suggests that this could happen before the end of this century if we don’t change current patterns of growth and energy consumption.²⁸ Climate change is expected to result in more extreme weather conditions, ranging from severe rainfall events in winter months to extended periods of drought in summer months. Documented changes have already been observed in the high latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere²⁹. Extreme warm weather and increased precipitation in certain regions of Canada have been documented since 1950³⁰.

Municipalities have two roles to play in addressing climate change at the community level: 1) through adapting to changing climatic conditions, and 2) by mitigating further GHG emissions. Adaptive measures promote planning and capacity building that will allow for communities to adjust to the potential impacts that are expected to occur. Mitigation efforts seek to reduce GHG emissions at the community level in order to avoid accelerating the effects of climate change.

4.2.6 Public Health and Community Safety

Individual, family and community health and public safety are important components of Canadians' quality of life and standard of living. Currently, many health conditions that affect individuals and their families are on the rise, including, obesity, diabetes, asthma, food allergies and cancer. Degenerative health conditions are also on the rise due to the aging Canadian population, and so too are the costs and services to address them. Concerns over public health and community safety also stem from emerging new threats, such as terrorism, cyber-threats (such as identification theft) and new strains of diseases with few known treatment options (such as antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria).

Public safety and security are priorities in all municipalities; however, Western Canadian cities have the highest crime rates in the country.³¹ Policing is a costly and essential service and municipalities pay over 50% of Canada's total police costs³². Mental, physical and spiritual health, along with safe communities that promote it, are becoming essential aspects that residents and newcomers use to evaluate the desirability of a community.

Municipalities are playing a greater role in providing healthy lifestyle choices for their citizens. Local governments can take an active role in promoting safe and healthy environments through the policies and planning that they undertake and the services that they provide. Land-use patterns, public spaces, transportation networks and incorporating natural systems are some examples of municipal planning activities that are increasingly thought to improve physical activity, psychological well-being and other positive results.³³ Local governments are also playing a greater role in disseminating information to their citizens. For example, community health and safety programs that focus on education and prevention in order to improve awareness of health and safety issues. In addition, some communities are taking a holistic approach to crime. Local governments are placing a greater emphasis on crime prevention, by introducing a variety of programs aimed at youth engagement. For example, building recreational facilities and park for youth programs can help deter criminal behaviour³⁴.

4.2.7 Changing local government and citizen expectations

Like in other industrialized nations, voter turnout (on average) has been declining steadily in Canada over time.³⁵ In 2008, voter turnout for the federal election reached a new historic low with an estimated 58.8% of eligible voters participating in the election.³⁶ In particular, the percentage of eligible young people that are voting is far lower than the percentage of older people, and as these young people age, they are expected to continue behaving in the same way, thus creating a further decline in voter turnout over time.³⁷ Based on data available up to 2005, Alberta had a low voter turnout compared to other provinces, and voter participation in municipal elections had been lower than either federal or provincial elections.³⁸

There are a variety of reasons offered for why voter turnout is declining, and in some cases, this trend may be due to growing public cynicism and mistrust in public institutions. It may also be that voters are interested in engaging in democracy in ways that outlive election platforms and elected

government terms. For example, there is an increasing expectation that governments should shift from government to governance, by making decisions with stakeholders as partners, rather than simply providing a range of services.

While citizens' expectations of municipal responsibilities increase, there has been a trend of federal and provincial governments to "download" responsibilities to municipalities without the necessary resources to implement these responsibilities. While municipalities need to continue to respond to the needs of their residents they likely won't be able to implement sustainability visions on their own. Municipalities will need to engage their residents in new and effective ways, and possibly as partners to achieve their sustainability goals.

4.2.8 Globalization and economic change

Countries around the globe are connected through the world economy. At no other time has this been so apparent than through the global impacts of the economic crisis that sparked the 2008 financial crisis and world recession. Globalization has enhanced global trade through policy and technological developments that facilitate cross-border trade, investment and migration³⁹. This has changed the environment in which countries interact with one another. Restrictions or standards in one region can have a significant impact on another, resulting in environmental, social and economic discrepancies. Globalization has given local governments access to markets outside their national context, but has also exposed them to new risks. For instance, bovine spongiform encephalopathy ("Mad Cow Disease") found in Canadian beef led to bans on Canada's imports in several countries and had a significant impact on local farmers.

Other economic trends are also impacting Canadian communities. In particular, the manufacturing sector has declined significantly across the country as manufacturing shifts overseas. Canada is largely a resource-based economy that exports raw materials however there has been widespread discussion of the transition to a knowledge and service-based economy and the impacts on individuals and communities. Technological improvements are changing the way businesses operate and develop, such as the advent of virtual offices and telecommuting.

From a sustainability perspective, the key issue is the fact that our economic system is fundamentally linear in nature⁴⁰. It focuses on producing products and delivering them to the customer in the fastest and cheapest way possible. We extract resources from the Earth's surface, process and manufacture them into goods, and then discharge the by-products (and eventually the products themselves) back into nature as massive amounts of waste. This "take-make-waste" or "cradle to grave" production system is firmly embedded as the dominant paradigm, and reflects an underlying assumption that we have unlimited ecosystem services to support us, and unlimited places to put our waste. However, there is an underlying problem with this model: it turns out that the Earth's air, forests, oceans, soils, plants, and animals do not have the capacity to endlessly supply increasing amounts of resources, nor can nature absorb all of society's pollution and waste. To address this issue, sustainable development offers an alternative circular model to economic development that is known as "cradle-to-cradle". This alternative economic paradigm eliminates the concept of waste entirely, because the production of goods and services are designed so that wastes (and the products themselves) can be reused and recycled in the production of other goods and services. Companies that have successfully adopted this approach - such as Interface Carpets and Hermann Miller Inc. - have continued to operate profitably while significantly reducing (and in some cases eliminating) their consumption of material inputs (e.g. energy, water etc.) and their production of waste.

It is important that municipalities take global trends and practices into consideration in their planning activities. Municipalities can work with local businesses to ensure that they are knowledgeable and prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the global market place.

4.2.9 Transportation and Mobility

Transportation and mobility describes the movement of people and goods. The type or mode of transportation available to people can have an effect on the level of fitness, quality of life and happiness of individuals. The types of transportation and degree of mobility can also have an impact on the environment and human health due to, for example, air pollution.

The general trend toward greater urbanization outside of city centers has brought people further from where they work and, as a result, has increased the average commute. The daily average commute (roundtrip) in Canada was 63 minutes in 2005⁴¹. The amount of time spent travelling is affected by the distance required to travel, but also by the mode of transportation available. The choice of alternative modes of transportation varies between cities and is largely dependent on city planning and available resources. The availability of alternative transportation mechanisms, such as public transportation, walking, biking, care-share programs and low-emission vehicles are becoming increasingly important to Canadians.

Municipal planning can help increase the availability of alternative modes of transportation for its citizens by incorporating smart growth principles. Offering public transportation is one way of increasing the choice of transport, but city planning can improve the accessibility to walking, biking and other alternatives to driving by connecting residential neighbourhoods to employment centres, create multi-use trails and creating exclusive bike lanes along roads⁴².

4.2.10 Built Environment and Housing

The demand for housing and recreational use buildings has increased with the growth in population. People want the built environment to be aesthetically pleasing, efficient and liveable. The diversity of housing types and other community buildings directly impacts the quality of neighbourhoods and the quality of life for the residents living in that community⁴³. The built environment must serve the variety of needs found in any community.

Trends in improving the built environment involve shifting from building primarily residential neighbourhoods to developing green buildings and “complete communities”. These mixed-use areas offer a diverse range of housing choices and include all the shops, services and amenities for a community in a single neighbourhood. Smart Growth is one example of this approach and is grounded in ten principles that enhance quality of life, are economically efficient, and preserve the natural environment. These principles include:⁴⁴

1. Mix land uses.
2. Build well-designed compact neighbourhoods.
3. Provide a variety of transportation choices.
4. Create diverse housing opportunities.
5. Encourage growth in existing communities.
6. Preserve open spaces, natural beauty, and environmentally sensitive areas.
7. Protect and enhance agricultural lands.
8. Utilize smarter and cheaper infrastructure and green buildings.
9. Foster a unique neighbourhood identity.

10. Nurture engaged citizens.

Land use and infrastructure planning provides municipalities with the tools to create communities and public spaces that improve the liveability for its citizens. Offering a range of housing and public space options can help municipalities meet the different housing and public service needs of its citizens and improve the quality of life for everyone in the community.

4.2.11 Ecological Health

The health of natural ecosystems is paramount to the survival of all living beings on the planet. Ecosystems provide free habitats and services for plants, animals and humans. These natural functions provide supporting, provisioning, regulating and cultural services that are dependent on the connections between natural environments.⁴⁵ Humans are dependent on the health of ecosystems to provide these services and the well-being of humans is directly related to the well-being of the ecosystems we live in. The health of much of the world's ecosystems, however, are in decline.⁴⁶ Lessening the impact people have on the environment will help improve the quality of life for people and other species.

The Living Planet Index, which measures the health of the planet's ecosystems, shows that they have been in steady decline since the mid-1980s. On a global scale, we're already seeing the consequences: the collapse of fisheries around the world is threatening lives and livelihoods; the loss of arable farmland is contributing to global food insecurity; and shrinking supplies of clean water mean many more people are vulnerable to preventable diseases like cholera and diarrhea. At the same time that natural resources are declining, our demand for them is increasing. The Ecological Footprint calculates how much of the planet's ecosystems are needed to produce the resources we use and absorb the waste we create, and it shows that our global demand for resources and ecosystem services has been rising steadily over the past 30 years. It tells us that our demand on the planet's living resources is already 30% greater than its capacity to regenerate those resources.⁴⁷

Municipalities can help sustain the natural environment within and outside their borders. The ecological footprint of a community can be reduced by municipal planning activities that allow for ease of mobility, preserve and protect natural spaces, and reducing the use of raw materials. Ecosystems provide services and raw materials that are used or consumed by communities. Services, such as climate and flood control, sustain the health and safety of communities. Raw resources, such as water and good quality soil, provide people with the necessities that are required to grow communities and are sometimes relied upon for the health of local economies.

4.3 EXPLORATION OF KEY ISSUES FOR MORINVILLE

This section provides an exploration of five issues that are of importance to Morinville.

4.3.1 Happiness and Quality of Life

4.3.1.1 Global, National and Regional Context

Studies on quality of life and happiness have been completed at international, national and regional levels all over the world. Examples of such studies include, the World Health Organization (WHO) that initiated its quality of life project (WHOQOL), the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions study of 28 countries that identified citizen's perception of life satisfaction, happiness and sense of belonging (alienation) and used different indicators to assess their impact on quality of life, and by Mercer that surveyed countries worldwide to produce quality of living rankings.

Table 3: Determinants of Happiness and Quality of Life

Study	Determinants of Quality of Life and Happiness
WHOQOL ⁴⁸	Physical health, environment, social relationships and psychological health
EFILWC ⁴⁹	Material living conditions, social relationships and support, quality of society and sense of belonging, and, time use and work-life balance
Mercer ⁵⁰	Economic environment, housing, health and sanitation, public services, etc.
Government of Alberta ⁵¹	Interpersonal relations, emotional well-being, personal development, material well-being, physical well-being, rights, social inclusion and self-determination

Quality of life and happiness have also been measured on the national level. The Government of Canada surveyed how its citizens felt about the social, economic and physical environment in which they live. Some of the domains that were surveyed include education, housing, employment and household finances. The result of the study was an individual quality of life index for social, economic and physical environment, and an overall quality of life index for communities with available data. The index shows that there exists geographic variation in the quality of life for Canadians. Communities located close to larger metropolitan areas were found to have higher levels of quality of life in general. Communities in Western Canada generally score in the moderate to high range of quality life⁵².

In general, these studies found that a higher quality of life associated with a sense of belonging and support structures and adequate work-life balance⁵³. In particular, poor work-life balance in Canada is thought to be eroding the relatively high quality of life we enjoy. A study by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing found that more Canadians are working non-standard hours (outside regular work hours) and fewer are participating in social activities. The effects of this are poorer physical and mental health and an overall lower satisfaction with quality of life.⁵⁴

4.3.1.2 Provincial or Regional Response

The quality of life in Alberta is considered to be one of the highest in the country and is generally consistent across the province. Alberta enjoys excellent health care, education, a strong economy and low cost of living⁵⁵. A report by the Government of Alberta divided the province into three regions and assessed quality of life in rural and urban areas. The report found that rural Alberta communities scored lower in satisfaction with availability to education and training, and community capacity, while

these same communities were generally rated as more attractive places to live and work when compared to larger urban areas. In contrast, urban communities enjoy better access to quality health services. One notable community, Edmonton, scored lower on seven of the eight domains of quality of life compared to the average regional scores.⁵⁶

The government of Alberta has created several initiatives that are directed towards improving the quality of life and happiness of its citizens. Improvements to the environment and social infrastructure are some of the areas targeted by the province. The Canada-Alberta Building Canada Fund – Communities Component (BCF-CC) program provides investment for municipal infrastructure by cost-sharing among the three levels of government⁵⁷. Another partnership between the government of Alberta and the federal government of Canada is the Canada-Alberta Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (CAMRIF). This fund is mostly directed toward improving the infrastructure needs of small communities. Wastewater systems and cultural and recreational facilities are examples of the types of infrastructure projects that are funded.⁵⁸

Rural communities are also targeted by Alberta Health, where access to high quality health care services may be limited. The use of “telehealth”, a technology that connects patients and specialists from different locations so that effective health-care decisions are made, helps increase access in remote areas. Another example, mobile renal dialysis services, travels to rural communities to provide specific healthcare services to citizens that would otherwise have to travel great distances to have access to these services.⁵⁹

In addition to government programs and funding, not-for-profit organizations are also taking steps to improve the quality of life for Albertans. The Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA) strives to build healthy communities through the promotion and conservation of natural areas and living healthy and active lifestyles. Its programs, such as *Communities ChooseWell*, empower communities to offer innovative programming and engage in community partnerships to reach a healthier province. This program recognizes local initiatives and awards prizes for community achievements.⁶⁰

The ARPA reports that as the Quality of Life Sector emerges within a new and evolving policy and governance environment, two things become clear. First, governments and not-for-profit organizations can no longer work in disconnected silos to meet the needs of individuals and communities. Second, hierarchies between levels of government and voluntary organizations are becoming increasingly irrelevant.⁶¹

4.3.1.3 Potential Impacts and Considerations for Morinville

Morinville’s MSP is concerned with meeting the long term needs of current and future generations. Happiness and quality of life indexes provide an excellent measure of whether the municipality is successfully meeting those needs. Morinville’s 2009 Residential Survey indicated that 93% of all respondents were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their quality of life in Morinville.

Potential impacts and considerations for Morinville include:

- Morinville currently enjoys high levels of resident satisfaction and these can be used to help brand the community and attract new residents. Morinville may wish to make this a key measure of MSP success in order to ensure that it remains a Town priority,
- Happiness and quality of life indexes can be used to help identify areas for investment and improvement in the community. For example, if Town residents reflect the provincial trend of

- having low levels of satisfaction with post-secondary education and training, then the municipality may wish to look for innovative mechanisms for meeting these needs,
- Morinville may wish to consider implementing a program for measuring quality of life and happiness trends in the community. There are existing programs with established methodologies to draw on, such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Quality of Life program or the Canadian Index of Wellbeing.

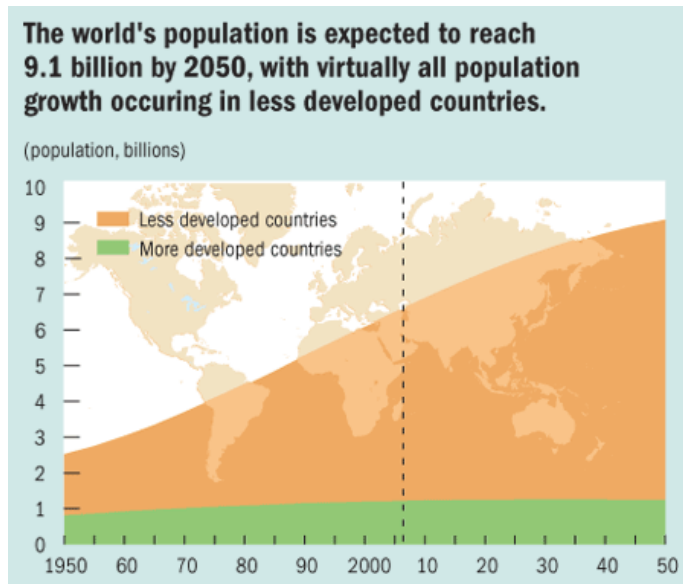
4.3.2 Demographic Shifts and Vulnerable Populations

4.3.2.1 Global, National and Regional Context

Today's global demographic trends have been occurring for over half a century. The world's population has increased dramatically and is projected to continue into the future. This growth is expected to be concentrated in less developed countries, where the population is growing at a rate five times faster than developed countries. In spite of this, birth rates have been declining and will slow the rate of population growth over the next fifty years. Because of this, combined with increased life expectancy, the world's population is aging. Developed nations have already reached a point where people aged 60 and over outnumber people aged 12-24 years old. Less developed countries are expected to experience this phenomenon by 2045⁶².

The global population is also becoming more urban. The urban population is forecasted to grow at a rate of 1.8% a year until 2030, increasing from 3 billion people in 2000 to 5 billion people in 2030. Mobility between countries is also expected to continue, driven by immigration from less developed countries to developed ones, with much of this being experienced in North America⁶³.

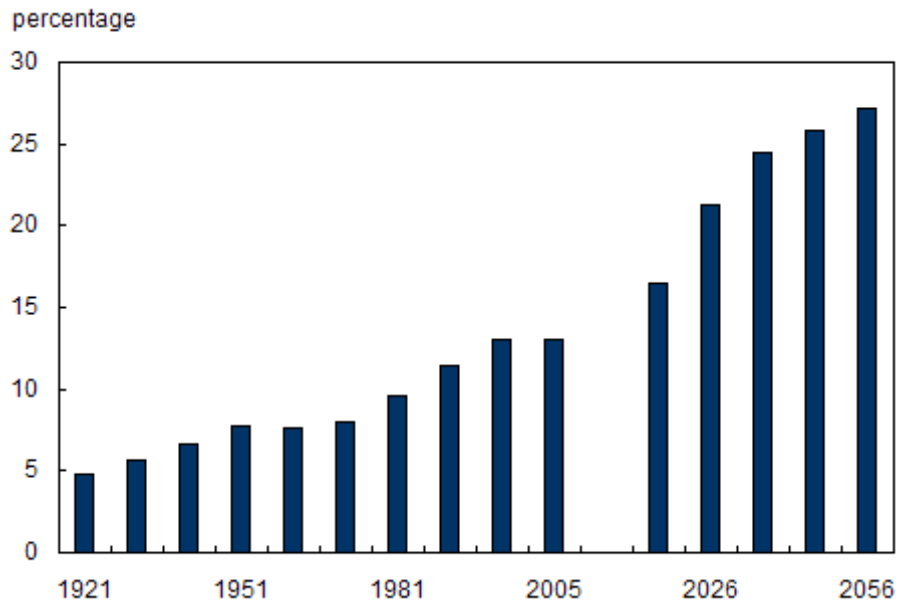
Figure 5: World Population Growth Expectancy⁶⁴



Canada's national trend mirrors that of the international picture. Longer life expectancy, low fertility rates and the effects of the baby boom generation are producing an aging population⁶⁵. Entering 2010, over 14% of Canadians were 65 years of age or older⁶⁶ and this number is expected to increase to almost 25% in 2036 and 27% 2056⁶⁷ (see figure 3). Although Canada's population is growing, it is immigration that has become the major source of Canada's growth. Between 2001 and 2006, Canada's population grew by 5.4%, attributed entirely to immigration⁶⁸ and it is expected that

visible minorities will account for 20% of the population by 2017. The First Nation population has also grown at a higher rate than the rest of the Canadian population, reaching 1.2 million people in 2006⁶⁹.

Figure 6: Percentage of Canadian population comprised of persons aged 65 or older, 1921 to 2005 and projections to 2056⁷⁰

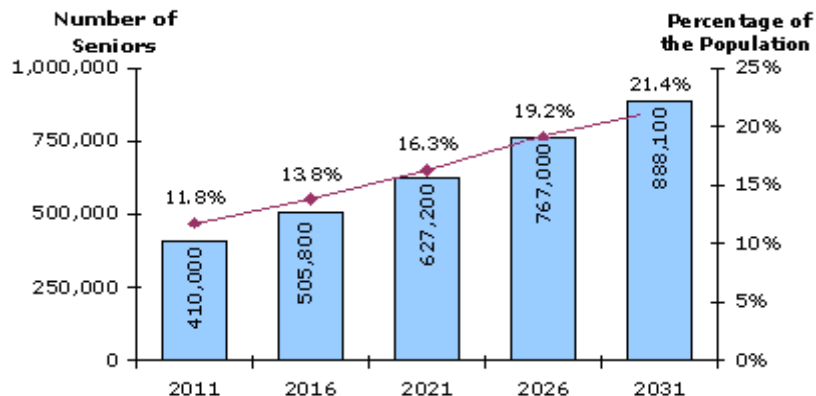


4.3.2.2 Provincial or Regional Response

The increase in average age is expected to vary among provinces. Currently, Alberta has the smallest percentage of people aged 65 and older at approximately 11.1%. It is projected that Alberta seniors will account for 21.4% of the provincial population by 2031⁷¹ (see figure). Following this trend of an aging population is the increase in numbers of people with disabilities. Currently, over 40% of people 65 years of age and older have a disability and the rising number of seniors will increase in this number.

Future growth in the population is expected to come from immigration and an increase in the population of First Nations. The proportion of Albertan immigrants is expected to increase from 15% in 2001 to between 16% and 19% in 2017. Alberta’s First Nation population is also projected to rise in the years to come⁷².

Figure 7: Alberta’s Aging Population⁷³



The government of Alberta has identified the demographic changes that are occurring and have taken several steps to ensure that the province is prepared to meet the needs of an aging population and increasingly multicultural society. In 2008, the government of Alberta established the Demographic Planning Commission in order to develop an Aging Population Policy Framework. This framework will be used to guide policy and program decisions that will help the province meet the needs of future seniors⁷⁴. Housing for the elderly is also being addressed through Alberta's Seniors Lodge Program. This program subsidizes the cost for accommodations to seniors with meals, laundry, housekeeping and recreational services provided.⁷⁵

The Alberta government has also developed initiatives targeted at its growing First Nations population. The First Nations Economic Partnership Initiative (FNEPI) was created to encourage greater First Nations participation in the Alberta economy. This initiative aims to develop effective partnerships between First Nations and industry to improve participation in the province's natural resource sectors, and to strengthen their economic capacity and involvement in the growing Alberta economy.⁷⁶

4.3.2.3 Potential Impacts and Considerations for Morinville

Demographic shifts have a tremendous impact on municipalities, as they may require significant changes to community services and infrastructure. The Town of Morinville has a population of 7636 and this number is growing at a rate of 3.4% per year. Morinville's current demographic is young - the average age of the Town's population is 33.7 years old according to the 2008 Census - and the Town is home to many young families. There are 387 citizens over the age of 65, representing 6.9% of the Town's population.

Potential impacts and considerations for Morinville include:

- Morinville may need to evaluate how accessible the community is for an aging population, in terms of everything from health care services, independent and semi-independent living facilities and building standards for universal access.
- Morinville may want to review the services it provides to new residents from other parts of Canada and around the world to consider if they could be improved. This could include welcome programs, language and skills training, and events that celebrate diversity and bring community members together. It may also include marketing activities to attract new people to the community.
- Morinville may need to review its recreational programs and services that are offered to ensure that they adequately reflect the needs of a younger population and young families, while maintaining important services for the seniors living in the Town.
- Morinville may want to investigate the existing volunteer opportunities in the Town and determine if they could be improved. New initiatives, such as youth internships, can provide important experience for younger individuals and good opportunities for local business.
- Morinville may also want to model the impacts of an aging population on its tax base and services cost, and develop a strategy to address them.

4.3.3 Equity and Affordability

4.3.3.1 Global, National and Regional Context

Equity and affordability considers economic trends and issues of debt and equity at the level of individuals, municipalities and other levels of governments. Globally, governments all over the world

have incurred large debts in an attempt to stimulate their economies and recover from the recent global recession. This financial crisis had significant repercussions for global and local economies, creating high levels of unemployment and debt for many people. Between 2007 and 2010 over 30 million additional people became unemployed, bringing the total number to more than 210 million worldwide. In Canada, although a significant number of jobs were created as a result of fiscal spending, the unemployment rate today remains at 8.1%⁷⁷.

Trends regarding national and individual saving levels are also showing warning signs. The federal government of Canada's efforts to stimulate the national economy have resulted in an estimated federal deficit of up to \$56 billion for 2010⁷⁸. At the individual level, increased unemployment levels have helped to drive increases in household borrowing. Canada's debt to disposable income ratio has hit 146%, the highest figure in the past 20 years.⁷⁹

Income disparity has also been increasing over the past thirty years. At a global level, the richest 200 people in the world have a combined annual income that is greater than that of the poorest 2.5 billion people.⁸⁰ Within Canada, the average annual income (adjusted for inflation) for the top income bracket in Canada increased by 37% between 1976 and 2007, while the average income of the lowest income bracket remained relatively the same over that time period⁸¹. This gap in income is further exacerbated by the recent recession⁸² and also by the affordability of essential goods, such as housing. The cost of home ownership in Canada continues to rise due to higher home prices and mortgage rates. This cost is taking up an increasing proportion of household income.⁸³

4.3.3.2 Provincial or Regional Response

The global recession has had regional impacts as well. Alberta has experienced some of its highest rates of consumer bankruptcy in 2008 and 2009. The first quarter of 2009 saw 2,353 individuals apply for bankruptcy; two thirds of this number was located in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary⁸⁴. However, despite some of the hardships brought by the global recession, Alberta as a whole has continued to perform well. The unemployment rate in Alberta is 6.5%, lower than most other provinces and the national average⁸⁵.

The cost of living in Alberta compared to other regions of the country is relatively higher. The consumer price index in Alberta is the highest in the country at 123.3⁸⁶. Affordability in housing is also lower in Canada's Western provinces. A CIBC World Markets report found that Alberta house prices are 12.5% above fair market value⁸⁷. The price of a home in Edmonton, for instance, grew by 53% between 2002 and 2007.⁸⁸ The growing income disparity in the province may also be affecting affordability for some, where the income of the top income bracket was 8.9 times higher than the lowest income bracket in 2007.⁸⁹

Regional plans, such as *The Way We Live: Edmonton's People Plan*, have made affordability a major goal. The city aims to reduce the financial barriers to affordable housing, transportation, recreation, social and other leisure opportunities for its citizens. In addition to this, the plan aims to promote equality and be more inclusive to its First Nations population by responding to their needs through the Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord.⁹⁰

Non-governmental organizations are also trying to address issues of affordability and equity through partnerships with municipalities. The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) has created an Affordable Housing Toolkit designed to help municipalities develop a strategy to creating affordable housing for their communities.⁹¹

Municipalities are also experiencing serious issues related to equity and affordability. Canadian municipalities build, own and maintain most of the infrastructure that supports the economy and quality of life. For the past 20 years, municipalities have been caught in a fiscal squeeze caused by growing responsibilities and reduced revenues, driven in large part by the “downloading” of services from the provincial and federal governments. As a result, municipalities have deferred needed investment, and municipal infrastructure has continued to deteriorate. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) tracks this “municipal infrastructure deficit” and reported it at more than \$123 billion in 2007.⁹² There is serious concern that this downloading trend will continue. For example, the implementation of new proposed federal wastewater regulations will require communities to rebuild 1 out of every 4 wastewater treatment plants across the country, at an estimated cost of \$13 billion. Downloading the full cost of the regulations could push municipal budgets to the breaking point.⁹³

4.3.3.3 Potential Impacts and Considerations for Morinville

Morinville is not immune to broader trends of equity and affordability, and is experiencing a general rise in the cost of living, which includes utilities, food and transportation and housing. However the Town is well-placed to address local issues and impacts. The Town has also been effectively and proactively managed and has a capital plan and a reserve fund. There is a good cost-to-service quality of taxation, and the same is true for utility rates and infrastructure. The Town also benefits from a highly skilled and well-educated community with an average family income that is well above the provincial average.

Potential impacts and considerations for Morinville include:

- The majority of Morinville residents work outside of the community and are therefore sensitive to broader changes in the provincial and regional economy. It is anticipated that federal and provincial governments will have to reduce spending, which may include job cuts and additional downloading of services that could affect the Town’s fiscal planning. Morinville may wish to evaluate this broader context and model the impact of different scenarios on their fiscal planning and infrastructure spending.
- Similarly, increasing individual debt-to-disposable income levels mean that Morinville residents could be highly sensitive to changes in housing prices and mortgage rates. In some communities, this has led to increasing foreclosure rates with associated impacts on community cohesion and property taxes.
- Higher unemployment rates which may result in increased demands for community services, such as food banks, community health, and employment services. This increases pressures on municipalities and also on local non-governmental organizations. Morinville may wish to consider adopting a proactive approach and developing partnerships to help meet this need and reduce fiscal impacts.

4.3.4 Peak Oil and Energy

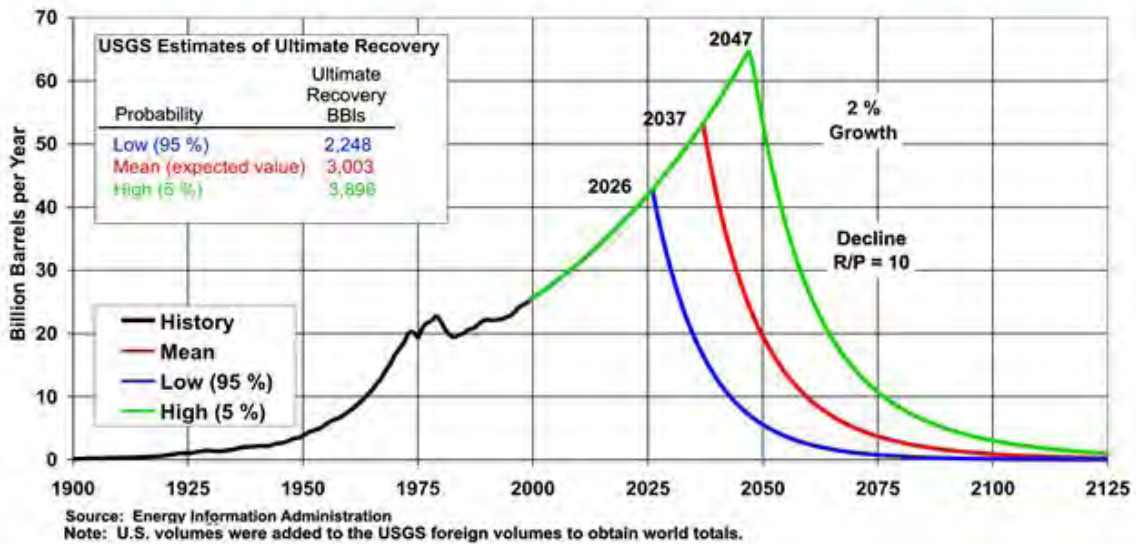
4.3.4.1 Global, National and Regional Context

Although the concept of “peak oil” is still being debated, many agree that the amount of conventional oil reserves is decreasing. Estimates for peak oil range from today to the year 2050 or beyond, but most experts believe that conventional oil located outside OPEC Middle East countries has already reached its peak or will do so within the next decade. However, there still remain many sources of non-conventional hydrocarbons, which some speculate are extremely abundant and would extend the projection of peak oil further into the future. The cost of extracting these non-conventional sources is

an issue, one that may push the demand for alternative energy sources, such as nuclear and renewable energy⁹⁴.

The following diagram is one model that illustrates three peak oil projections for conventional crude oil. The annual production scenarios are based on a 2% annual growth rate and are mapped against high, medium and low estimates of the total world supply of conventional crude oil, showing that production would peak in 2047, 2037 or 2026 respectively.

Figure 8: Three Annual Production Scenarios for Conventional Crude Oil Production⁹⁵



Conventional oil production has peaked in North America already, a situation that is also the case in Alberta. The price of oil has made non-conventional sources in Canada a viable option for oil production of oil and gas. Electricity prices have also been on the rise, reaching an average price of approximately 8 cents/kWh⁹⁶, which has spurred a growing interest in alternative methods of energy generation in recent years. Still, fossil fuels account for over 80% of Canada's energy production, with renewable energy contributing only 4% of the total⁹⁷.

4.3.4.2 Provincial or Regional Response

On a regional level, conventional oil and gas production has also peaked⁹⁸. The end of cheap energy has given the province of Alberta an opportunity to explore its vast reserves of unconventional oil, the oil sands. Although economically viable, the oil sands present greater environmental risks than conventional oil. The oil sands require extensive volumes of water to extract, creating large tailing ponds that have been hazardous to the health of birds, fish and other wildlife. The oil sands are also a major source of carbon dioxide emissions, a gas contributing to global climate change. Alberta's oil sands are the fastest growing source of carbon dioxide in Canada and are only expected to increase their share of the nation's total emissions in the future⁹⁹. The environmental impact has been a major source of controversy for oil sands development.

Recently, Alberta's Environment Minister, Rob Renner, announced that a panel of six experts will be selected to assess the impact of oil sands production on water quality. The panel is expected to provide extensive and comprehensible data regarding the current environmental conditions surrounding the oil sands. This information is expected to guide the Alberta government's decisions on how to best balance development with environmental protection¹⁰⁰.

The energy sector is a major component of Alberta's economy, contributing of 28.1% of Alberta's GDP¹⁰¹. Coal and gas is the major source of energy for the province, making up close to 85% of installed generating capacity. The remaining capacity is split between hydro, wind and biomass. Demand for energy is expected to rise in the future. To meet these demands, a number of proposed projects have been put forth that are expected to increase total capacity by 19,728 MW. These projects include renewable and thermal energy.¹⁰²

Alberta is responding to energy issues through its Provincial Energy Strategy which lays out a long-term action plan that intends to promote clean energy development, energy conservation and responsible fossil fuel production. The objective of this strategy is to provide the groundwork to increase the contribution of renewable energy in Alberta while continuing the development of the province's oil sands reserves that are expected to foster economic prosperity.¹⁰³

The Alberta Energy Research Institute (AERI) has partnered with industry and government to create the Alberta Energy Innovation Strategy. This strategy promotes, among other things, maximizing the value gained from resource extraction and improving environmental management practices. This strategy also seeks to increase the share of clean energy throughout the province.¹⁰⁴

4.3.4.3 Potential Impacts and Considerations for Morinville

Trends in oil and gas development and consumption could impact the Town of Morinville in many ways. Many residents are either directly or indirectly employed by oil and gas development activities which creates a strong link between Morinville's prosperity and the success of that industry.

Potential impacts and considerations for Morinville include:

- Increased interest in renewable energy development (wind, biomass, solar etc.) could present economic opportunities for the Town. Diversifying in that direction would also reduce the Town's economic dependence on the oil and gas industry.
- Energy prices have been increasing, and Peak Oil would accelerate that process, driving up operational costs for Morinville residents, businesses and the municipality itself. One way of buffering against these changes is through investing in energy efficiency programs and municipally-owned energy projects (such as district heating or energy).
- Globally, a significant increase in energy costs would impact shipping and transportation costs, thereby affecting the price of everything from consumer goods to food products. Many communities are working towards increasing their "food security" by investing in local food production for local consumption. These investments range from municipal procurement policies to farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture.

4.3.5 Climate Change

4.3.5.1 Global, National and Regional Context

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has released several reports that link observed changes in global climate to human activities, specifically, burning fossil fuels. Global atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased from these activities since the mid 1700's, creating a heating effect. Warming of the atmosphere, ocean, and loss of ice mass indicates that the global climate change experienced over the past 50 years is very unlikely to be caused by natural forces alone. If current emissions trends continue, the increase in global average temperature is projected to be between 1.8°C and 6.4°C. Several impacts are projected, including sea level rise,

widespread changes in precipitation patterns, more extreme weather conditions, etc¹⁰⁵. A recent report by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) projected that as many as 1 billion people could be displaced by climate change by 2050¹⁰⁶.

Canada is a major emitter of greenhouse gases. Despite Canada's commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, Canada's emissions grew by 24% between 1990 and 2008, and approximately 81% of these emissions were produced from energy sources¹⁰⁷. There is evidence of the warming affect since 1948, during which the temperature for the country as a whole has increased by more than 1.3°C on average. Data show that since 1950 there have been more extreme warm days and nights, increased levels of precipitation in certain regions, and fewer extreme cold days and nights. Future projections of climate change impacts in Canada include more intense and frequent heat waves, increase in annual precipitation, increase risk of flooding, and a range of health, economic and social impacts¹⁰⁸.

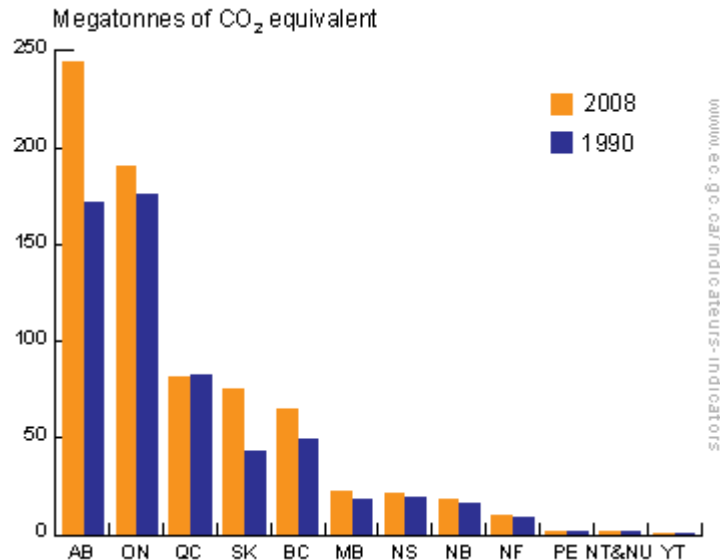
Many Canadian provinces and municipalities have committed to taking significant action on climate change. For instance, British Columbia, Ontario and Québec are partners in the Western Climate Initiative – a partnership with several American states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁰⁹ The province of British Columbia is also committing to work towards carbon neutrality. LiveSmart BC is the BC government's plan to make all of its operations carbon neutral for 2010 and beyond.¹¹⁰ As a non-governmental organization, the Federation for Canadian Municipalities has also taken on the challenge of responding to climate change. The Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) program is a network of Canadian municipalities that are committed to taking action on reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.¹¹¹

4.3.5.2 Provincial or Regional Response

Alberta contributes a significant proportion of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions. During the period of 1990 and 2008, Alberta was responsible for 52% of the growth in Canada's emissions¹¹². On a national level, Alberta is responsible for 32.5% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, mainly in part to fossil fuel power generation and the fossil fuel industry. The oil sands are expected to be the largest contributor of emissions for the entire country¹¹³. In 2007, the largest share of Alberta's emissions belonged to the utilities sector (43.6%) with the oil sands making up the second largest emissions by sector (23.3%)¹¹⁴.

The major concern in Alberta is the impact climate change is expected to have on the availability of water. Climate change could result in reduced surface water supplies due to declining summer and fall runoff, continued glacier retreat and changes in river stream flow. Less groundwater recharge is expected to take place, creating further shortages in water supplies for people in Alberta¹¹⁵. Droughts may lead to more frequent wildfires, while warmer winter could lead to more pests and disease. Ecosystems in south and central Alberta are also at risk of desertification due to the changing patterns of precipitation¹¹⁶. The anticipated health and economic impacts of climate change in Alberta puts greater pressure on the region to create adaptation plans that can reduce the severity of some of the impacts and to prepare citizens for such changes.

Figure 9: Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions by province, 1990 and 2008¹¹⁷



The provincial government has taken action on climate change. Its Climate Change Strategy aims to mitigate the impacts of climate change by taking action in three areas – implementing carbon capture and storage, greening energy production and energy conservation¹¹⁸. In addition to this, Alberta has established a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Program that requires facilities that emit 100,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases a year or more to reduce emissions intensity by 12%¹¹⁹.

The government is also partnering with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) to create the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre. This centre will provide technical assistance and expertise to municipalities on innovative ways to conserve energy, improve energy efficiency and initiate renewable energy projects for communities¹²⁰.

4.3.5.3 Potential Impacts and Considerations for Morinville

Climate change will impact the Town of Morinville at multiple levels. At a policy level, there is increasing pressure for municipalities to track, manage and reduce their GHG emissions. Locally, environmental changes, such as water levels and availability, could have a significant impact on Town operation. Water conservation has already been an issue for the Town due to reduced snowfall levels in recent years.

Potential impacts and considerations for Morinville include:

- Increasingly, municipalities are opting to act to reduce their GHG emissions for ethical, environmental and economic reasons. A commitment to sustainability inevitably entails a commitment to significant reductions in GHG emissions through investing in energy efficient equipment, upgrading buildings, and investing in alternative energy production.
- Based on current trends, it is highly unlikely that communities will be able to avoid having to address the local impacts of climate change. Adaptation strategies include water conservation and efficiency, planning for increased frequency of extreme weather events (such as flooding, tornadoes, drought, etc.) and considering local impacts on agricultural production.

- There are many opportunities to partner with other municipalities and organizations to address climate change. The AUMA and FCM both have active programs in this area, and many businesses now offer performance-based contracts to defray the capital costs of energy efficiency improvements.

5 Current Morinville Reality

This section presents a snapshot of the current reality in Morinville in the fall of 2010. It has been developed based on input from stakeholders, Morinville administration and research and reports on the Town. Morinville is a diverse and active community and it is impossible to capture everything about it in one brief document; therefore, the information below is simply intended to provide a high-level overview of the key context, issues and assets that the MSP can build on and respond to.

5.1 GOVERNANCE

The Governance pillar is defined in terms of municipal election processes, the Town's capacity to manage resources and develop and implement sound public policy, and the mechanisms through which citizens and groups engage and interact with Council, the administration and each other. Governance looks at how both local government (Council, administration) and community stakeholders (individuals, businesses, other organizations) engage in planning and decision-making.

5.1.1 Context

The Town of Morinville's democratic life revolves around the municipal elections, which are held every three years. The Town officially holds positions for a Mayor and six Councillors who meet on a regular basis through Council meetings, to make decisions and provide direction to Administration. Morinville has established a standard suite of standing policies and bylaws. There are several modes of involvement for residents in the Town's democratic process: they can be present as part of a delegation at a council meeting, attend a public hearing, send communications in writing, contact the Mayor or Councilors directly, or serve on a Town Committee.

The Town's governance structures include various boards such as the Development Appeal Board, Assessment Review Board and the Municipal Planning Commission. In addition, Morinville is a member of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Edmonton Capital Region participates in a number of local planning and governance committees.

5.1.2 Assets

- **Service delivery and town administration.** Morinville has strong and dedicated staff members. A 2009 survey found overall high citizen satisfaction with the Town service delivery. Morinville has a progressive council, which has resulted in open policy discussion. Communications and transparency have also improved, in part due to the Town's communication initiatives, such as the Community Guide. The Town's website has also been improved and will be updated again once the marketing and branding project is complete in 2011.
- **Fiscal responsibility.** Morinville enjoys a solid financial situation – the Town has a low debt, is well-managed in terms of financial planning, and reserve funds for a variety of infrastructure needs.

- **Partnerships.** The Town has developed successful partnerships with its municipal neighbours and the Chamber of Commerce, has established a good relationship with the RCMP and many citizens are engaged and active in town life.

5.1.3 Key Issues

- **Citizen engagement.** Due to its location close to Edmonton and St. Albert, Morinville is perceived by some community members as “just a bedroom community”, which results in a lack of interest from some residents to get involved. Although there has been a low voter turnout in the past, it has improved greatly in recent years. However, there is a perceived need to educate residents as to how to bring issues to the Town Council. Communication channels to the public are limited at the moment, and gaining input from people in the community can be challenging.
- **Planning and policy documents.** Approximately half of Morinville’s existing planning policies and documents need to be updated. The Town needs to think more regionally from a planning perspective (i.e. planning & development, infrastructure and recreation).
- **Citizen expectations.** As with many communities, residents’ expectations for the level and quality of municipal services are high and often extend beyond the capacity of current resources to meet them.

5.2 CULTURAL

The Cultural Pillar is defined in terms of the shared values and cultural and recreational activities that reflect the diverse traditions, customs, values, heritage, identity and history of the Town. These provide a source of social cohesion; a sense of community, a repository of shared values, and a source of inspiration, innovation and creativity that enhance and support individual and community quality of life, spirit, pride and engagement.

5.2.1 Context

In 2011, the Town of Morinville will celebrate its 100th anniversary – a century of history shaped by a strong French, German and First Nation heritages.

Culture is central to the Town’s life. A 2009 survey on quality of life satisfaction found that residents regard museums and cultural programs offered by the Town as being of high importance, although they are not entirely satisfied with them as they currently stand. Morinville has also identified a need for more opportunities and infrastructure to meet the needs of the many creative talents that are active in town, which is reflected in the Recreation, Parks and Open Space Master Plan as well as the Town’s capital plan.

5.2.2 Assets

- **Festivals and events.** The Town of Morinville hosts a number of festivals and events during the year, including St. Jean Baptiste Festival, Lite up the Nite Christmas Festival, Family Day Snowman Festival and the Fall Active Living Fair.
- **Arts, culture and heritage infrastructure.** The Town has a strong French and German heritage, which is actively promoted and maintained by the Morinville Historical/Heritage Society. St. Jean Baptiste Church is the first historical building in Alberta and three other buildings have been designated as heritage sites. In addition to Morinville’s seven churches, Morinville residents will

have access to a new Community Cultural Centre in 2011. The Centre is designed to be multifunctional in order to support a variety of needs (e.g. performances, programs, trade shows, weddings, community events, conventions, etc.). The Musée Morinville Museum, located within St. Jean Baptiste Park, is also central to the Town's community infrastructure and attractions.

- **Community program offering.** The Town provides well-attended preschool, youth, adult, senior and community programs, as well as a community grants program. The community can use school spaces for events. Low-income families have also access to community support through funding for community recreation and social programs. Moreover, Morinville's high school has strong drama, music and technology programs.
- **Recreational facilities and services.** Morinville's recreational facilities include walking trails (some with new exercise equipment), a library, sport fields, parks, playgrounds, an arena and a curling club, a splash park, a skate board park, a fish and game pond, a karate club, a dance club, and gyms. Heritage Lake provides a nearby recreation area and RV campground. Other community services and facilities include music lessons, boy scouts, the Legion, Parish Hall, and the senior's Rendez Vous Centre.
- **Community connectedness built around culture.** Morinville's residents are proud of their town and are engaged in the community - existing not-for-profit groups are active around heritage, museum, theatre, choral, drama, pottery, arts, and there is a fish and game clubhouse.
- **Aesthetics and public spaces.** New street lights and banners increase the attractiveness of the town.

5.2.3 Key Issues

- **Diversity.** Some community members are very engaged in volunteer activities, however it has become a challenge to meaningfully engage other groups such as newcomers and youth. It is also perceived that it can be difficult for newcomers to break into the community culture, groups or volunteer activities. With a predominantly white population, Morinville currently lacks ethnic and cultural diversity, and immigrants may not feel as welcomed as they could be. There are also perceived divisions between youth and older generations.
- **Service and program offering.** Current services and programs are not reflective of an increasing and changing population. For example, teen programs are weak and there is a lack of amenities for youth programs. Improved maintenance of existing cultural assets is required to support the community need for sports, recreation and leisure activities.
- **Resources.** There are insufficient resources - in terms of human resources, skills diversity and financial requirements - for the Town to effectively deliver on cultural events and services. Financial resources are also needed to improve streetscape and beautification efforts in the town.
- **Facilities and spaces.** An increasing population puts pressure on Morinville residents' access to the town facilities. Many rentable facilities are small or aging and, as a result, space is currently at a premium for groups to host events or for the various programs offered in town. In addition, many residents would like to have access to a swimming pool, indoor soccer and other amenities that available in the city.
- **Aesthetics.** Although Morinville has a strong heritage and the Town currently lacks architectural design standards that reflect the heritage. Main Street is a provincial highway and is under the

jurisdiction of Alberta Transportation, so this limits the revitalization initiatives that the Town can undertake, for example tree planting.

- **Distinct identity.** Morinville's distinctiveness needs to be established and promoted.

5.3 SOCIAL

The Social Pillar is defined in terms of the health, wellbeing, safety and quality of life of individuals, families and the community. It is grounded in the diverse relationships in the community, levels of mutual trust, respect and civic engagement, and the skills, education and knowledge of individuals and organizations.

5.3.1 Context

The Town of Morinville's has a population of 7636 and this number is growing at a rate of 3.4% per year. Morinville's current demographic is young - the average age of the Town's population is 33.7 years old according to the 2008 Census - and the Town is home to many young families. One of Morinville's key attributes is its small town feel and atmosphere.

The vast majority of respondents (approximately 93%) to the 2009 Residential Survey were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their quality of life in Morinville. Most common reasons for their satisfaction ranged from the quietude and calmness of the Town and the satisfaction with services, to the fact that it is a safe place to live and that it is close to major city centers.

Most private homes in Morinville are single-detached dwellings, and 86% of the housing in the Town is resident owned. In the 2009 Community Housing Plan, the Town of Morinville has expressed its commitment to helping provide its community with a wide range of housing choices. Grant funding is available as part of the Plan.

There are many organizations and programs in the community that deliver social services such as the Foodbank, Midstream Society, CoreLinks, career and employment counselling programs, preschool programs and daycares, among others. The Town provides facilities at no cost, in which several of the organizations operate.

A variety of organizations support public safety in the community and a Traffic Safety Committee has been established by Council with representatives from the RCMP, Town and residents as well as the Community Peace Officer.

5.3.2 Assets

- **Quality of life.** Morinville offers a high quality of life to its residents with its attractive town and local environment. Affordable housing is available in well-maintained older neighbourhoods and in new neighbourhoods. Seniors have access to a range of services, such as the Rendezvous Centre and the Sturgeon Foundation's housing services. Day care is offered in the community and at the Town's schools. Residents can buy their fruits and vegetables at the weekly farmers' market during growing season. Morinville is close to post-secondary education institutions in Edmonton, including the University of Alberta, NAIT and Grant MacEwan University.
- **Public Safety and Security.** The Town has a volunteer fire department, a RCMP detachment and emergency health services, including ambulance services. Morinville is close to hospital facilities located in St. Albert and in Westlock. The Town also has a Traffic Safety Committee.

- **Education.** The Town has well-regarded schools including French immersion, elementary, and secondary school. The Town and School Board jointly fund an RCMP Community Liaison officer that specifically liaises with students at the schools.
- **Social support.** Morinville has a food bank and residents have access to employment services. The Town manages the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) grant provided by the provincial government to ensure Family and Community Support Services are offered in Morinville. Interagencies are present in Town and include Alberta Health Mental Health, Big Brother/Sisters, ADDAC, etc.

5.3.3 Key Issues

- **Land use.** Municipally-owned land is limited and which creates challenges for public infrastructure; for example future sites for schools have not been identified.
- **Limited budget and jurisdictional complexity.** The Town will need to find additional revenue to continue to provide services, maintain assets to meet increased population and service demands. Morinville has not compiled an inventory of all the services provided by various levels of government and other organizations that, if available, could help Morinville to prioritize its service delivery based on an identified need.

5.4 ECONOMIC

The Economic Pillar is defined in terms of achieving economic growth and development that simultaneously improves our quality of life and the environment. It includes employment and income levels and the health, quality and diversity of employers and businesses in the community. Economic activity defines the unique character of the community, provides work opportunities for residents and generates revenue for the municipality.

5.4.1 Context

The Town of Morinville is composed of a highly skilled and well-educated community. The average family income is \$79,432, well above the provincial average of \$73,823. Morinville's workforce is primarily working in the technology and engineering, business, health and recreation sectors. According to the Morinville 2008 Census Report, the primary industry of employment for residents is construction, followed by retail, services, business services and education.

The Town has many established businesses and an active Chamber of Commerce. Morinville actively participates in regional planning activities and has been formally acknowledged for its contributions in the past. The Town has the ability to positively contribute towards the future development of key roadways in the area, and industrial expansion opportunities are expected in a near future. However, Morinville is outside of the priority development area in the Edmonton region.

The Town of Morinville is experiencing a general rise in the cost of living, which includes utilities, food, transportation and housing. Indeed, the price of housing in the Edmonton area increased by 11% between 2006 and 2007 - the total percentage increase from 2002 to 2007 was 53%.

5.4.2 Assets

- **Town Management.** The Town has been effectively and proactively managed (e.g. the Town has a long range capital plan, reserve funds, etc.). There is a good cost-to-service quality of taxation,

and the same is true for utility rates and infrastructure. A Town branding, marketing and communications strategy project is underway and is scheduled to be completed in December 2010, the new town brand will be used to develop an enhanced website as well as develop strategies for marketing and communicating Morinville.

- **Facilities and space.** The town has a business park and lease space for businesses range between \$10 and \$15 per sq ft. This is lower to many popular retail centres in Edmonton, where lease rates range from \$25 and \$40 per sq ft.¹²¹
- **Business and economic development.** Morinville can count on its active Chamber of Commerce and on proactive partners to develop business opportunities. For example, the Capital Region Board is completing a regional economic development strategy in late 2010 (which includes Morinville) and Sturgeon County hosts an Economic Development Committee in which the Town participates. In addition, Morinville has access to “Community Futures” services. The Town is also planning to initiate an Economic and Tourism Strategy in 2011.
- **Location.** Morinville is well-positioned within the capital and Edmonton metro area and, as such, is an attractive center for workers and businesses. Residents have diverse skills and professions and many commute to Wabamun Power Plant, Fort Saskatchewan, CFB Edmonton, St. Albert, Edmonton and Fort McMurray to work. The Town has a number of core businesses and services needed by the residents. Morinville’s location offers opportunities to participate in the “green economy”, through wind energy for example, and nearby land can be developed for agriculture and business purposes.
- **Economic vitality.** Morinville’s economy has experienced significant growth in recent years. The Town has a strong industrial business area. Many home-based businesses have also been started. Both Champion Pet Foods and Subway won international awards in recent years. The Town hosts an annual tradeshow every spring.
- **Tourism.** Morinville’s strong heritage is an asset to attract tourists. Morinville also participates in the annual Tour de l’Alberta, and other sports events, such as hockey and curling tournaments, that bring people and business to the Town.

5.4.3 Key Issues

- **Tax base diversification.** Morinville’s tax base needs to be diversified, as it is almost entirely based on the residential sector. This constrains capacity to meet increasing demands, as raising residential property taxes is not a preferred option.
- **Facilities and space.** Land available for new business is currently limited in Morinville, while existing business infrastructure – the business park – needs to be updated to maximize the use of space and to provide more visibility to the businesses that reside there. There is also a need for more affordable lease space for businesses, and Morinville’s downtown core needs to be revitalized.
- **Local and small businesses.** The Town is currently experiencing a loss of small businesses to big markets. For example, St. Albert Centre Shopping Mall is diverting customers from Morinville’s smaller shops and services and franchises is hurting small businesses in the downtown core.

- **Local employment opportunities.** Although the Town has experienced high residential growth in recent years, there are minimal employment opportunities within Morinville's boundaries. The lack of a marketing strategy and the relatively unknown status of the community, combined with facilities and space issues, make it difficult to attract new business. There is no overnight courier service and the Town currently lacks access to transportation options (train and bus).
- **Constraints on industrial growth.** The existing land use plan constrains industrial area land development. The existing industrial lands could benefit from enhancements. The proximity of the South Glens residential development prohibits certain types of industrial activities and development.

5.5 INFRASTRUCTURE

The Infrastructure Pillar is defined in terms of the state of the built environment and the services that support it. It provides the physical foundation for the community and is shaped by community investment and planning and development standards.

5.5.1 Context

The Town of Morinville's transportation network is characterized by its proximity to the Highway 2 corridor and to two railway routes (freight lines). A provincial highway passes through the Town. Mobility infrastructure at Morinville also encompasses trails and parks.

Morinville has well established and strong engineering standards. Facility audits have been conducted and preventive maintenance plans are under development. Morinville's water is supplied through the City of Edmonton, but water infrastructure is owned and operated by the Town. Wastewater is collected and treated by the Alberta Capital Region Wastewater Commission (CRWWC) which serves 13 municipalities in the Capital Region. As for energy supply, the Town receives power supply from Fortis and natural gas from Alta Gas.

5.5.2 Assets

- **Water infrastructure.** Morinville's water infrastructure is in good condition. The Morinville waterline has the capacity to accommodate a population of 25,000 - 30,000. Ponds and underground infrastructure are in good condition, and an upgrade of the lagoons capacity is underway through a partnership with CRWWA. The Town has flood prevention infrastructure through the Manawa Canal. The town owns and operates the Morinville Waterline and sells water capacity to Sturgeon County and the Town of Legal.
- **Mobility and transportation.** The Town vehicle fleet is in relatively good shape and is maintained through a capital replacement plan for vehicles. Roads and utilities are in excellent shape and there are adequate trails in Morinville. Morinville's infrastructure can accommodate growth, allows for spontaneous use, and supports and promotes health and wellness.
- **Facilities.** Facilities, including parks facilities, are owned by the Town and are relatively well-maintained.
- **Town staff.** There is a high level of service excellence standards at the Town of Morinville.

- **Waste disposal.** The Roseridge landfill has more capacity than is currently used.

5.5.3 Key Issues

- **Land.** Morinville has a shortage of municipally-owned land as well as a lack of future industrial land. Parks and open spaces need improvement, as there is currently no irrigation, and it lacks fertilizing and detailed maintenance.
- **Aging infrastructure.** In older areas of the Town, aging infrastructure will need to be replaced, particularly with regards to sewage and storm water infrastructure, sidewalks and roads. The water line is starting to age and will need to be replaced in the long term. The Town also needs to undertake long range capital replacement planning for some of its facilities.
- **Facilities.** Morinville requires greater capacity and better maintained facilities with increased standards to support community needs. Demand for these recreational facilities is currently higher than supply. The youth centre also needs improvement and is under utilized by the target demographics. The town hall and the library will undergo renovations in 2012, however it is anticipated that the civic administration could outgrow the space within 5 - 10 years.
- **Skills.** The Town's administration currently lacks infrastructure experts or specialists and must outsource these areas to consultants or contractors.

5.6 ENVIRONMENTAL

The Environmental Pillar is defined in terms of the health, quality, diversity and abundance of local (and global) ecosystems and the services that they provide to the community. It is enhanced by minimizing the consumption of environmental resources, conserving natural systems, and minimizing pollution.

5.6.1 Context

The Town of Morinville's general population supports living in, and maintaining, a clean town. Morinville has a reasonable amount of green space and there are lakes and ponds within its limits. Even though there is no movement to conserve arable land inside the Town's boundaries, Morinville is adjacent to very productive land.

Water conservation has been a priority in Morinville this year due to the low amount of snowfall last winter and subsequent minimal runoff and rainfall this spring. Moreover, lowering of the water table has been reported in northern Alberta; and some local lakes, such as Sandy Lake, may be impacted in the future.

5.6.2 Assets

- **Urban vegetation and wildlife.** Morinville has an abundance of mature trees and urban wildlife, such as birds and hares. The Town enjoys excellent water quality. Morinville has green spaces that could be transformed into community gardens and large lots that could be used for infill or food production. Ponds also provide drainage, while a borrow pit near Heritage Lake is now a waterfowl and bird area.

- **Local environmental stewardship programs.** The Town has a curb side recycling program as well as a composting program for yard waste. Morinville also initiated a voluntary water conservation program. The local Fish and Game Association is active in promoting stewardship. The new Community Cultural Centre has been built to environmental standards.

5.6.3 Key Issues

- **Awareness and education.** Environmental education and awareness needs to be increased. There are currently no programs or incentives to support more environmentally friendly choices such as low flush toilets, tree planting, car pooling or environmental friendly appliances and lighting.
- **Resource utilization.** Morinville currently has a limited recycling program and, although yard waste is collected, there is no home-based composting program. The splash park water is currently not recycled. As summers are very dry, irrigation is required frequently and long winters result in high heating requirements. The cost of energy alternatives, such as geothermal heating or wind energy, is considered prohibitive at the moment.
- **Industrial activity.** Local industry can, at times, release strong odours – but it is not a health risk. A significant complaint from residents, visitors and business owners is the foul smell emanating from one of the businesses in the industrial park. It is recognized that the odour has negatively impacted the decisions made by individuals considering residency in Morinville, as well as by business to locate here. The presence of a pipeline, and of the Enbridge and Heartland transmission lines, can also result in negative environmental impacts. The railway, which goes through town east-west and north-south, could be a safety risk for spills or accidents.
- **Clean transportation options.** As a small town, Morinville lacks public transportation options and residents are currently automobile-dependent. Walking and cycling trails connectivity between some neighbourhoods and the remainder of the town are also limited.
- **Planning and policy documents.** Key municipal documents need to be updated to reflect environmental concerns. For example, Morinville currently has no policy on tree or habitat conservation, and has no environmental master plan. Morinville's existing land use bylaw or other land use policy documents do not discuss green building, site design, landscaping provisions or alternative energies such as wind, solar or geo-thermal. The Municipal Development Plan and land use bylaws are in need of updating.

5.7 WHAT RESIDENTS VALUE ABOUT MORINVILLE

The Town of Morinville engaged residents in late 2009 and early 2010 through a series of workshops on municipal sustainability. That process included asking residents what they value about Morinville in each pillar area. The results are summarized below; there is no result for Infrastructure as that pillar was added at a later date.

Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value democratic processes through elections • Local and approachable • Deal with issues in a timely fashion • Value commitment of politician
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community pride & Spirit • Bilingual • Cultural uniqueness • Value the potential • Big church presence • Welcoming of new families & cultures • Using the past to create the future • German / French / First Nation history • Historic buildings • Attitude & atmosphere • Celebrate cultural differences • Catholicism / religion history • Faith-based community • Current celebrations and festivals
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of small town • Safe & caring community • Friendly • Know your neighbours • Place for everyone • Senior support & involvement • Positive youth development • Community pride & ownership • Locally owned & operated business
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing • Value for tax dollar • Small town business values • Variety of shopping options to meet most needs
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean air • Clean industry • Wetlands • Cleanliness • Recycling programs • Existing walking trail systems • Location • Existing green spaces & trees • Park facilities i.e. playgrounds

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