

# Council Policy



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## Public Engagement Policy

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**Policy Number:** CP284/2021  
**Approval Date:** November 9, 2021  
**Supersedes Policy:** CA196/2018

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### SECTION A

#### Policy Statement:

- 1. The public and stakeholders of the Town of Morinville:**
  - a. Have the right to be informed, consulted, and engaged in decisions that affect them.
  - b. Are encouraged to meaningfully engage so their voices strengthen decisions and their involvement helps build a stronger community.
  - c. Are encouraged to increase their understanding and knowledge about local issues as well as their role in Morinville's decision-making process so they can participate in a meaningful way.
  
- 2. The Town of Morinville:**
  - a. Will provide public engagement opportunities that are open and transparent.
  - b. Will give serious consideration to the public's input gathered in public engagement processes.
  - c. Is committed to working together with the public to continuously improve its public engagement processes.
  - d. Supports Town staff to build their skills and knowledge to engage the public in a meaningful way.
  - e. Believes that public participation leads to better decision making and is a shared legislative and civic responsibility of Council and Administration, and a civic responsibility of the community.
  - f. Will provide reasonable support to enable meaningful engagement and develop plans which respond to identified barriers.

### **Policy Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to establish the foundation for the Town's reasons, guidelines and procedures for conducting public engagement. This policy applies to both staff and external consultants/contractors.

The Policy provides direction to Administration on how to involve stakeholders in providing input into decisions that affect the community.

### **Definitions:**

**Public Engagement:** A formal, defined, interactive process between the Town, the public and stakeholders, designed to increase mutual understanding gather information, exchange ideas, and/or solve problems with the goal of making better, more informed decisions.

**The Public:** Anyone (including groups and individuals) who may have an interest in a specific topic or issue under discussion. The public may, or may not, be directly impacted by a decision on the issue.

**A Stakeholder:** An individual or group who has a specific interest or is impacted by a topic or issue. Stakeholders may include, but are not limited to: residents, non-residents, businesses, groups, organizations, individuals, representative and/or Town staff, depending on the issue.

### **Guidelines:**

#### **Principles of Public Engagement**

Public Engagement in the Town of Morinville will be planned, implemented, evaluated and reported using these nine guidelines:

1. Public Engagement is **PROACTIVE**: It is initiated early enough for participants to make informed decisions and impact the outcomes.
2. Public Engagement is **RELEVANT** and **EFFECTIVE**: the process is planned, effectively communicated and implemented to encourage public participation and contribution in an appropriate manner.
3. Public Engagement is **EQUITABLE**: Members of the public are provided with a reasonable opportunity to contribute, developing a balanced perspective.
4. Public Engagement is **CLEAR** and **FOCUSED**: The Town and the public understand their respective roles in a public engagement process, including the level of involvement and how input will be used to inform decisions.
5. Public Engagement is **INCLUSIVE**: It uses a range of methods to engage various audiences to maximize participation and improve the quality of feedback.

6. Public Engagement **INCREASES UNDERSTANDING**: Mutual understanding is increased through two-way interaction, where the information presented is easily understood by the intended audience(s).
7. Public Engagement is **RESPONSIVE** and **ONGOING**. Public engagement has an ongoing focus on relationship building, active listening, and increased understanding.
8. Public Engagement **BUILDS CAPACITY**; Staff, public and stakeholders are better equipped for future engagement opportunities.
9. Public Engagement is **ACCOUNTABLE** and **TRANSPARENT**: public engagement outcomes are measured, evaluated and reported in a timely manner.

### **Public Engagement Circumstances**

Public engagement is required when:

- Legislation requires it
- Council or Town Administration requests it

Public engagement may be required when:

- Citizens or stakeholders request it
- Formulating recommendations to Council regarding the proposed business plans and budgets
- Reviewing existing programs, services, and associated service levels;
- Establish a new programs, services and service levels
- Citizens' quality of life may be affected
- The natural environment may be affected
- Geographical communities or communities of interest may be affected
- There are already strong views on the issue
- Many people will be affected

Public engagement is not required when:

- The decision has already been made
- The issue is related to the development of an administrative policy that doesn't require or involve public consultation
- Public/Stakeholder input will not be considered

### **Public Engagement Approaches**

The public engagement continuum gives guidance to Town staff to determine the level of engagement for a particular project. The levels represent increasing degrees to which the public can impact the decision or outcome.

*Inform* – To provide the public/stakeholders with objective information and advise them of issues/initiatives.

*Consult* – To educate and collect public/stakeholder opinion to improve decisions.

*Involve* – To stimulate public/stakeholder dialogue, clarify values and broaden the information base to improve decisions.

*Collaborate* – Partner with citizens and stakeholders in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives, recommendations and preferred solutions.

*Empower* – Delegate the authority for some or all aspects of decision making and implementation to the public/stakeholders to improve community capacity.

### **Expiry Date**

For the purpose of ensuring this Policy is reviewed for ongoing relevancy and necessity, with the option that it may be re-passed in its present or an amended form following a review, this policy expires December 31, 2025.

This policy shall remain in effect if the review date passes prior to formal review.

Administration will provide an update to Council on the effectiveness of this policy in achieving public engagement at Council's mid-term.

## **SECTION B**

### **References to other Policy and Legislation**

*Municipal Government Act*

Morinville 2035: Growing Together, Municipal Sustainability Plan (MSP)

Strategic Priorities Update 2020

Council Policy 196/2008 Strategic Planning and Management

Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA)

### **Persons Affected**

Council, Administration, Employees, Consultants/Contractors, Public, Stakeholders

### **Divisional/Departmental Responsibility**

Administrative Services / Communications & Legislative Services

### **Review/Revision History and Author**

CA196/2018

Original Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Simon Boersma  
Mayor

Original Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Stephanie Labonne  
Chief Administrative Officer