

MUNICIPAL CENSUS MANUAL REVIEW



A Discussion Document on the Municipal Census in Alberta

Alberta Municipal Affairs
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MUNICIPAL CENSUS MANUAL REVIEW

In Canada, there are four provinces and territories (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nunavut, and Yukon) that have legislation that allows municipalities to conduct a municipal census. As of 2006, municipalities in Alberta were the only ones that exercise the option to conduct a municipal census.

Undertaking a census is entirely up to the municipality. About 80 per cent of Alberta municipalities still rely on the federal census conducted by Statistics Canada. The Municipal Affairs Population List contains information collected by the municipality's own census and the federal census.

To ensure valid and reliable population counts, the Government of Alberta has adopted enumeration procedures for conducting a municipal census that align with Statistics Canada methodologies. This enhances comparability of population counts between municipalities that conduct a municipal census and those that rely on the federal census.

There are many potential benefits of conducting a municipal census. With frequent and accurate population counts, municipalities may be better able to plan and deliver services to residents. Municipalities experiencing high population growth may qualify for more funding through provincial grants that are based on population counts. Municipalities may find a new census is warranted if they believe the population has changed significantly since the last census.

Changes to the Municipal Census Manual impact all municipalities in Alberta. Potential changes could result in more funding for municipalities that conduct a municipal census and less funding for those that rely on the federal census. As a result, all municipalities are encouraged to participate in the Municipal Census Manual Review.

Municipal Government Act (MGA)

The *Municipal Government Act* is the legislative framework in which all municipalities and municipal entities across Alberta operate. It has been updated to best serve Albertans for decades to come. Government conducted extensive public consultations to update the legislation.

Determination of Population Regulation (DPR)

The authority for conducting a municipal census is contained in Section 57 of the *MGA*. The Determination of Population Regulation specifies the requirements to be followed by municipalities and Metis Settlements that choose to conduct a municipal census. It defines what a municipal census is, sets out the timing of the census, how the municipal census should be conducted, and how the results are to be submitted to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Under the regulation, municipalities may choose to conduct a census. If a municipality chooses to conduct a census, it must follow the Determination of Population Regulation and the Municipal Census Manual.

As part of the *Municipal Government Act* Review, government invited feedback on the Determination of Population Regulation. All Albertans, municipalities, municipal associations, Metis

Settlements and government ministries were invited to participate. Using the feedback received from stakeholders, the regulation was amended and approved in October 2017.

Municipal Census Manual

Not all key concerns identified by stakeholders were dealt with in the 2017 Determination of Population Regulation Review. Stakeholders were advised that policy discussions such as mail-out census questionnaires and members on leave for Metis Settlements would be addressed in the 2018 Municipal Census Manual Review.

The objective of the Municipal Census Manual Review is to:

1. Update the Municipal Census Manual by:
 - a) incorporating feedback from municipal stakeholders; and
 - b) updating collection methodologies that result in verifiable population counts.
2. Ensure that, where appropriate, methodologies align with:
 - a) *Municipal Government Act*,
 - b) *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*,
 - c) Determination of Population Regulation; and
 - d) Statistics Canada.

This document is an opportunity to continue the conversation with our stakeholders on the municipal census manual, and as such, you will find a:

- discussion and description of emerging topics, and how the manual and/or regulation can be amended to address them; and,
- listing of proposed general technical amendments.

This discussion document will be available for stakeholder feedback until January 2, 2019. Comments may be submitted through an online questionnaire on the Municipal Affairs website <http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/municipal-census>. Feedback from this discussion paper will be used to inform potential amendments to the Municipal Census Manual.

For statistical issues, a technical committee has been set up consisting of representatives from the ministries within the Government of Alberta, University of Alberta, Concordia University, and Statistics Canada. These changes are included in this draft of the Municipal Census Manual and will be available for review by all municipal stakeholders and Albertans.

What is not being covered?

The Municipal Census Manual Review will include the mandatory requirements for census taking; however, some aspects of the census are not part of the review. These include:

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- discussion around the amendments made to the Determination of Population Regulation that came into force on October 2017;
- provincial and municipal grant programs;
- all other provincial legislation; and
- the Municipal Affairs Population List.

IMPORTANT TERMS FOR A MUNICIPAL CENSUS

BACKGROUND

The Municipal Census Manual contains key terms and definitions for those that are conducting a municipal census. These key definitions are listed under the chapter “Important Terms for a Municipal Census.”

CONTEXT OF TOPIC

Key terms in this section include usual residents, shadow population, non-contacted dwellings, private dwellings, and Metis Settlements. However, not all key definitions are included in the section.

Key terms for conducting a municipal census will be included in the chapter “Important Terms for a Municipal Census.” A more complete list of census terms will be included in the glossary.

The statistical terms and definitions in the Municipal Census Manual are based on those recognized by Statistics Canada and other statistical agencies, and will be updated accordingly.

IMPLICATIONS

Standardizing the definitions in the Municipal Census Manual to align with Statistics Canada will result in consistent terminology between both censuses. Consolidating key definitions under one section will improve the readability of the manual.

POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS FOR DISCUSSION

Topic	Current Status	Proposed Changes
Municipal census	The definition of a municipal census in the manual is under the definition for “usual residents.”	Add the term and definition to this section to clarify that a municipal census is “a population count of the usual residents in the municipality, conducted in accordance with the DPR and the Municipal Census Manual.”
Metis Settlements	Metis Settlements information is included in the section “Important Terms for a Municipal Section.” However, the information on Metis	Move this section from the chapter “Important Terms for a Municipal Census,” and create another chapter in the manual for Metis Settlements.

Topic	Current Status	Proposed Changes
	Settlements does not contain a definition of what a Metis Settlement is, but rather how the municipal census manual applies to Metis Settlements.	
Census date	A date to reference when asking the census questions. The census date is either the first day of enumeration or a date prior to the enumeration period.	Add the term and definition of census date.
Collective Dwellings	Although the term is used throughout the manual, some municipalities have requested further clarification on the different types of collective dwellings.	Add the term and definition of collective dwellings to the chapter “Important Terms for a Municipal Census.”
Enumeration	Although the term “enumeration” is used throughout the manual, the definition is not contained in the manual. Municipalities have confused the term to mean the completion of the census process. Enumeration means obtaining a household’s response to the census questions. Municipalities can begin enumeration from April to June 30, and conduct quality assurance up to September 1 of the municipal census year.	Add the term and definition to the chapter “Important Terms for a Municipal Census.”
Enumeration Area (EA)	Some municipalities indicated that they were confused by the definition of enumeration area contained in the manual. An EA is defined as “smaller areas within the municipality that may be established to collect and analyze information for various	Change the definition to match the definition used by Statistics Canada: “An enumeration area (EA) is the geographic area canvassed by one census representative. An EA is composed of one or more adjacent blocks. Enumeration

Topic	Current Status	Proposed Changes
	planning applications.”	areas are only used for census data collection.”
Household	Some municipalities have confused the term “dwelling” with “household.”	Add the term and definition in the chapter “Important Terms for a Municipal Census.”
Personal Identification Number (PIN)	<p>According to the manual, a PIN is “a unique code to gain secure access to the online census form.”</p> <p>Some municipalities have indicated that the term “PIN” has caused discomfort for residents as this term is usually associated with payment cards and may be required to complete a financial transaction.</p> <p>According to Statistics Canada, a Secure Access Code (SAC) is used to access online surveys only.</p>	Change the term Personal Identification Number (PIN) to “Secure Access Code (SAC).”
Temporary resident	Municipalities have asked for further clarification on what constitutes a “usual resident” versus a “temporary resident,” as only usual residents are included in a municipal census population count.	The addition of a definition temporary resident would clarify who is being counted in a municipal census.
Quality Assurance	The term “quality assurance” is used throughout the manual and is defined within the body of the manual.	Add the term and move the definition to the chapter “Important Terms for a Municipal Census.”

METIS SETTLEMENTS

BACKGROUND

There are eight Metis Settlements in Alberta. Under the *Métis Settlements Act*, the Metis Settlements General Council (MSGC) has the authority to conduct a census within Settlement boundaries. Metis Settlements do not fall within the definition of a municipal authority according to the *MGA*, and they reserve the right to conduct their own municipal census. However, if a Metis Settlement wishes to include a settlement count in the Municipal Affairs Population List, the population count must be undertaken according to the Determination of Population Regulation.

Population counts submitted to Municipal Affairs from Metis Settlements would have to follow the definition for “usual residency.” For the purposes of their own census, Metis Settlements reserve the right to count other persons who do not fit the definition of a usual resident. However, since these would not follow the regulation, they would only be included in the Settlement’s own count, and not in the Municipal Affairs Population List. Some examples of individuals from a non-regulation count include those who are:

- “on leave of absence”;
- “permanently absent”;
- “off settlement”; or
- those for whom there is insufficient information provided by the Settlement to classify.

In 2009, the Minister met with the Metis Settlements General Council to resolve this issue. It was agreed that the ministry would consider including members on leave of absence with the population counts, as long as they were on a leave of absence approved by the settlement council for no more than five years before the census, and that the member has executed a written intent to return to the settlement. These conditions will allow members who are away for school and/or internship opportunities to be considered usual residents of the settlement.

In the absence of a census breakdown to define the usual resident for Metis Settlements, the most current federal census counts would be used in the Municipal Affairs Population List.

Deviations from the Determination of Population Regulation and the Municipal Census Manual require prior approval from the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

CONTEXT OF TOPIC

The province is committed to open and accessible engagement with Albertans on the Municipal Census Manual Review. Proposed changes in the review will affect all Albertans, as census information is used by provincial and municipal governments to plan and deliver services to residents. All Albertans, Metis Settlements and municipalities will have the opportunity to comment on all aspects of the Municipal Census Manual.

IMPLICATIONS

Including members on leave would ensure consistency of legislation between the *Metis Settlements Act* and the Determination of Population Regulation. However, this would result in greater deviation between the federal census and municipal census numbers for Metis Settlements only, as Statistics Canada only includes the count of usual or permanent residents.

POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS FOR DISCUSSION

Topic	Current Status	Proposed Changes
Members on leave	In 2018, the Metis Settlements Council conducted a census and submitted a Members on Leave count for all 8 Metis Settlements that satisfied the conditions set out by the Minister.	Metis Settlements to submit their members on leave counts using the “Metis Settlements Members on Leave Form” similar to the Shadow Population Verification Form and Municipal Census Form.

CENSUS METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND

In 2011, Municipal Affairs commissioned an independent review of the Municipal Census Manual to bring existing census methodologies into alignment with the data quality guidelines of Statistics Canada.

Prior to the 2011, the only accepted methodology for census taking was by a paper-based census. Enumerators would conduct the interview in person and record the responses on paper forms using a pen or pencil.

The 2011 Municipal Census Manual Review resulted in the inclusion of the following census methodologies:

- Electronic census wireless: Rather than recording the responses on a paper-based form, the enumerators conduct the interview in person and enter the responses into a wireless device such as an iPad. This method is not currently used by Statistics Canada.
- Electronic census – online: A personal identification number (PIN) or secure access code for the census is mailed or delivered to all dwellings, along with a link to the census website. The respondents visit the website and complete the census form online. The responses are automatically entered into the census central database.
- Hybrid system: Municipalities are free to choose any combination of the three census methodologies (paper-based, electronic census-wireless, or electronic census-online).

The Municipal Census Manual includes instructions for all of these methodologies. The manual also contains additional census questions that municipalities may choose to use. There are also various samples of census materials, such as a letter of introduction, a standard census form, and other material related to the census in the appendices.

CONTEXT OF TOPIC

The manual was intended to reflect the statistical methodology and concepts used by Statistics Canada and other statistical agencies at the time.

IMPLICATIONS

Proposed changes would align methodologies to be consistent with those Statistics Canada uses today.

POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS FOR DISCUSSION

Topic	Current Status	Proposed Changes
Mail-out census questionnaires. This questionnaire has been	Municipalities have requested to collect census information through the use of self-	Add this methodology as an accepted census methodology. Statistics

Topic	Current Status	Proposed Changes
designed specifically to be completed by a respondent.	administered surveys. The inclusion of this methodology requires ministerial approval.	Canada currently uses self-administered surveys for enumeration.
Telephone interviews	Municipalities have indicated that some residents prefer to conduct their census interview over the telephone rather than online or by enumerator visit.	Include procedures on how to conduct a telephone interview.
Paper-based census	The sections on paper-based census focuses on the use of a standard census form contained in Appendix F of the 2018 Municipal Census Manual. Municipalities that have conducted a paper-based census have opted to not use the standard census form.	Revise the methodology to better align with Statistics Canada and add an example of an updated paper-based census questionnaire.
Paper-Based Census and Electronic Census-Wireless	<p>The manual has a chapter for conducting a paper-based census and electronic census-wireless. However, there is considerable overlap in the role of the census coordinator in both of these methodologies.</p> <p>Some municipalities have also confused the term “paper-based census” with mailing out census questionnaires to residents.</p>	Reduce the duplication of information to by including one chapter “Interviews at the Door” as this refers to enumerators conducting interviews in person and recording the responses using a paper or pencil, or an electronic device such as an iPad or tablet.
Procedures to enumerate collective dwellings	Municipalities have requested further details on how to enumerate collective dwellings.	Include procedures and templates that can be used to enumerate collective dwellings
Reference material to be used in a census	The appendices contain various samples of census material, such as a letter of introduction, callback	Update the census material to include those used by Statistics Canada and other municipalities.

Topic	Current Status	Proposed Changes
	<p>material, response category cards and other materials related to the census. These are samples only. Municipalities are free to develop their own census material.</p>	
<p>Additional questions to be used on a municipal census</p>	<p>The Municipal Census Manual contains optional questions that can be used in conducting a census. This includes gender, age, employment, etc.</p>	<p>Update the optional questions to align with the 2016 federal census. This will allow comparability between the federal census and municipal census data.</p>

DATA QUALITY

BACKGROUND

Statistics Canada uses a number of guidelines to ensure that data quality is recognized nationally and internationally as an appropriate standard. These include relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, interpretability and coherence.

In 2010, a study was commissioned by Municipal Affairs to examine whether the census methodology in the Determination of Population Regulation and census manual aligned with the data quality guidelines of Statistics Canada.¹ The municipal census counts collected by municipalities scored high for accuracy, currency, interpretability, and comparability. However, the census counts scored lower in other measures of data quality. In order to increase the data quality of the census counts to approach those of Statistics Canada, the following amendments were made to the Determination of Population Regulation:

- All municipalities submit affidavits saying they used prescribed census methodology from the regulation and manual.
- Ensure that all census coordinators and enumerators sign oaths and statements that they used the prescribed methods in their census activities. Signing the oath or statement communicates the seriousness of following the census requirements, and reduces the chances of misinterpretation;
- Include a field report to the population affidavit form submitted by municipalities, which identified the total count of population and dwellings, and the number of non-contacted dwelling and refusals. The inclusion of this information provides a concise summary of the quality of the data collected for the census.
- Implement a reverse record check or quality assurance procedures in the Municipal Census Manual. This standard involves re-interviewing residents to determine whether a census enumerator had visited the sampled residence and verify the usual resident count.
- Update the census manual to reflect emerging practices such as internet-based surveys.

In 2010, the manual served only as a guideline on how to conduct a municipal census. The manual was updated in 2011, and is now an attachment to the Determination of Population Regulation. The use of the manual is mandatory and contains the requirements on how municipalities should conduct a municipal census. The standardization of census procedures has improved the accuracy and comparability of the population counts across municipalities.

CONTEXT OF TOPIC

The census is so much more than just a head count. Census information is used to plan the provision of health care, education, employment, transport, etc. It is used to help determine where to build new schools, roads, health-care facilities, child-care and senior centres. Census numbers can help bring new businesses to your community. When a company is looking for new locations in which to set up operations and conduct business, one of the first things they consider is the population. Accuracy of the census data is paramount to ensure quality decision making.

¹ Prairie Research Associates (April 20, 2010). Review of the Official Population List, Final Report.

IMPLICATIONS

Municipal Affairs is committed to bringing existing census methodologies into greater alignment with data quality guidelines used by Statistics Canada. Proposed changes would ensure the statistical integrity of the municipal census counts.

POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS FOR DISCUSSION

Topic	Current	Proposed
Quality assurance	Municipalities have expressed a need for the ministry to review the quality assurance requirements of contacting 1000 or 10 per cent of all households, whichever is less. Households that have completed their census surveys online do not require this quality assurance check.	The methodology has revised and lowered to better reflect the needs of the community.
Extrapolation or estimation of population	Municipalities have requested the right to extrapolate population counts to residences that have not been counted in census. This applies to situations where refusals or non-contacted dwellings have been encountered.	Currently being reviewed by the Ministry and Statistics Canada.