

# MUNICIPAL CENSUS MANUAL

## Workbook

Prepared by: Strategic Policy and Planning Branch  
Alberta Municipal Affairs  
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# MUNICIPAL CENSUS MANUAL REVIEW

## AN INTRODUCTION

The *Municipal Government Act (MGA)* affects the daily lives of all Albertans. It helps define how our municipalities look and function, and the types of services they provide. In other words, it is the guide to how Alberta municipalities operate.

The authority for municipalities to undertake a census is specified through Section 604 of the *MGA*. The *MGA* also provides the Minister of Municipal Affairs the authority to make regulations that define who is counted, how a municipal census is carried out, and procedures for submitting the census results to Municipal Affairs.

Section 604 of the *MGA* is why we have the Determination of Population Regulation (DPR). 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. Therefore, 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, anticipate growth and deliver services to residents. Municipalities experiencing high population growth may qualify for additional provincial grants based on updated population counts. Municipalities may find a new census is warranted if they believe the population has changed significantly since the census.

**Changes to the Municipal Census Manual will impact all Alberta municipalities.** As a result, all municipalities and municipal stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the Municipal Census Manual Review.

## WHAT IS BEING REVIEWED NOW?

In 2017, a number of sections within the Municipal Census manual required updating as a result of changes made within the Determination of Population Regulation (DPR). However, not all concerns identified by stakeholders could be dealt with at that time. Stakeholders were advised that a future revision to the Municipal Census Manual would address concerns specific to the manual only, such as quality assurance, and call-back procedures.

The objective of the Municipal Census Manual Review is to:

1. update the Municipal Census Manual, ensuring key issues raised by municipal stakeholders during the DPR review are considered, and new data collection methodologies that result in verifiable population counts are integrated; and
2. make certain, where appropriate, that 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.

The Municipal Census Manual standardizes the processes for enumeration and improves the reliability and validity of information collected. This ensures the statistical integrity of the Municipal Affairs Population List.

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. The technical committee will have an opportunity to review the changes, and provide feedback.

#### WHAT IS NOT BEING REVIEWED?

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:

- amendments to the DPR that came into force on October 2017;
- shadow population, given the complexity of the issue;
- provincial and municipal grant programs;
- all other provincial legislation; and
- the Municipal Affairs Population List.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

**Your opinion matters to us.** Your input on such key issues as the definition and provisions of shadow population, requirements for quality assurance, and the need to include self-administered or mail-out surveys to the municipal census will be included in the Municipal Census Manual Review.

**We want to hear from you.** We are counting on you, our partners and experts within the field of census enumeration, to help conduct a thorough and effective review of the Municipal Census Manual.

You are invited to submit feedback on behalf of your municipality or organization through the workbook until December 7, 2018. The workbook can be worked on, saved and set aside, and completed at a later time at your convenience. Feel free to answer as many questions as you like, depending on the topics that interest you. **Please refer to the discussion document “Municipal Census Manual Review, A Discussion Document on the Municipal Census in Alberta” for more detailed information on the issues.**

You can share your feedback by January 2, 2019 via on these methods:

- Online: <http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/municipal-census>
- PDF: Complete the questions within this PDF, save it and send to [lgs.update@gov.ab.ca](mailto:lgs.update@gov.ab.ca).
- Mail: Municipal Census Manual Review, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor, Commerce Place, 10155 – 102 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L4.

## QUESTIONNAIRE: HAVE YOUR SAY

### IMPORTANT TERMS FOR A MUNICIPAL CENSUS

The chapter “Important Terms for a Municipal Census” contains the definitions for key terms for those conducting a municipal census. 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.

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.

### **Please let us know your opinion of the following proposed changes:**

1. Consolidating all key terms and definitions in the chapter “Important Terms for a Municipal Census” has improved the readability of the manual.
2. The terms and definitions for conducting a municipal census should be consistent with Statistics Canada
3. Do you have any comments you would like to make on the important terms for a municipal census?

## METIS SETTLEMENTS

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 *Municipal Government Act*, 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. 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.

## IMPLICATIONS

Including all members in leave would ensure consistency of legislation between the *Métis 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.

### **Please indicate your opinion of the proposed changes:**

1. Metis Settlements should 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.
2. Do you have any comments you would like to make on members on leave?

## CENSUS METHODOLOGY

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 methodology 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.

## IMPLICATIONS

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

### **Please give us your opinion on the proposed changes:**

1. Mail-out surveys should be an accepted methodology for census taking.
2. Municipalities should be able to conduct telephone interviews as an accepted methodology for census taking.
3. The reference material such as suggested forms and census material, in the manual can be used by municipalities that conduct a census.
4. The procedures on collective dwellings are clear and easy to understand.
5. Do you have any comments you would like to make about census methodology?

## DATA QUALITY

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.

## IMPLICATIONS

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

### **Please give us your feedback on the proposed changes:**

1. The changes to quality assurance in the draft manual does meet the needs of municipalities.
2. Statistical extrapolation or estimates for population counts should be allowed for non-contacted dwellings or refusals.
3. Do you have any comments you would like to make about data quality?