

Subject: Municipal Census 2018**APPROVALS:****Annette Antoniak**_____
Director_____
Interim Chief Administrative Officer**Recommended Motion:**

THAT the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo conduct a municipal census in 2018; and

THAT the Minister of Municipal Affairs be requested to authorize the inclusion of the shadow population in the 2018 municipal census.

Summary:

A municipal census is required in 2018 to ensure that the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) maintains full access to per capita grant funding. The goal of the Municipal Census 2018 is to update the official population figures, including both the permanent and shadow populations and achieve a 100% dwelling enumeration, using a methodology that is accurate and consistent with provincial government legislation and policies to be accepted by Alberta Municipal Affairs as the Municipality's updated official population.

The Municipality may apply to the Minister to have the shadow population included as part of the municipal census. The application must be made prior to the commencement of the enumeration period outlined as April 1- June 30, 2018 and the shadow population must be verified every three years by a count. As it has been over two years since the municipal census was last conducted, it is imperative that it be updated to ensure continued access to funding related to the shadow population.

Following the Horse River Wildfire of 2016, it is important to get an accurate update of the official population and housing through a count to establish a new demographic benchmark for the region. The detailed demographic information collected is valuable to municipal departments, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, schools, utilities, emergency services, Alberta Health Services and Alberta Human Services for planning in our communities. Once approved, the data is also used for funding from the Federal and Provincial Government for various grants.

Alberta Municipal Affairs requires Council to authorize the conduct of a census by resolution of Council.

Background:

The Municipality conducts a census every two to three years. The most recent census was conducted in 2015. The municipal census is governed by the *Municipal Government Act Determination of Population Regulation*. It stipulates that a census must be conducted between April 1 and June 30 of the same year and the results must be submitted to Alberta Municipal Affairs by September 1.

April 3, 2018 is recommended as the census day and reference point of enumeration. Every person living or working within the Municipality's boundaries on that day are eligible and must be enumerated to get an accurate count of the population.

Completing a census in the municipality poses many challenges related to the geographic size of the region, hiring and retaining of enumerators, the composition of the workforce including those who travel in and out of the municipality and those who work long shifts. These and many other challenges must be overcome to achieve the desired goal and objectives of the census. Experience and recommendations will be utilized to mitigate the unique challenges on conducting a census in the region.

The census team in the RMWB has a strong commitment to continuous improvement of the census process and results. Lessons learned from previous censuses are documented and the recommendations are implemented in subsequent censuses. Some of the key recommendations from the 2015 census include increasing time spent on planning and logistics, maintaining strong relationships with internal and external partners, and maintaining a reduced length to the census questionnaire. These recommendations are currently being implemented to further improve the outcome of the 2018 census.

The enumeration process will count all persons within the RMWB including the urban service area, the rural hamlets and project accommodations. Three methods of enumeration which include self-enumeration (online), door to door interview, and telephone interview will be used. Should Council approve a Census in 2018, Administration will work to achieve high response rates and awareness with the public about the importance of the census.

The census team will collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to enumerate the population in project accommodations, help to engage the public on the importance of the Census 2018 through awareness and education. Through strong collaboration, enumeration in rural residential communities and multi-family dwellings in the urban service area will improve further. However, enumerating the residential shadow population in the urban service area (mobile workers and people who share rooms and suites in single family homes) will continue to represent a challenge for the census enumeration.

Budget/Financial Implications:

The Municipal Census funding will be captured in the 2018 Operating Budget based on

council approval. The proposed budget for the Census in 2018 is \$825,000. This is shared cost between the Planning and Development and Communication departments. The budget includes hiring and paying enumerators, temporary staff, training, advertising, supplies, mailing, online data collection and technical support. All expenses related to the 2018 census will be tracked and reported.

The Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) grant (which includes the Basic Municipal Transportation Grant (BMTG)), and the Gas Tax Fund (GTF) are allocated primarily based on the official population count including the shadow population as published by Alberta Municipal Affairs.

The official 2015 population count for the RMWB is one of the component used to estimate the aforementioned grants, and thus, the RMWB was eligible for the following amount in 2016:

- MSI (capital component) estimated at \$99.54 per capita or a total of \$12.45 million;
- MSI (BMTG component) estimated at \$60 per capita or a total of \$5.11 million;
- Gas Tax Fund estimated at \$53.91 per capita or a total of \$6.74 million.

If the official population of the RMWB is not updated in 2018 to accurately capture the shadow population through a census, the potential net financial impact for the RMWB could be a decrease in the MSI grant (capital component) received in the amount of approximately \$2.30 million to \$3.83 million or more starting 2018 (based on current rate of \$99.45 and 53.91 per capita).

Rationale for Recommendation:

There are significant financial implications to the Municipality in conducting a census not only in the form of grant funding but in relation to improvements in municipal infrastructure and capital projects. Accurate and up to date population data is critical for projects and initiatives, and municipal programs aimed at improving economic growth and social conditions of the residents in the region.

Should Council authorize administration to conduct a census in 2018, including an updated count of the shadow population, a request would then be submitted to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for approval to enumerate the shadow population as part of the Municipal Census 2018.

An update of the municipal census will enhance decision making based on evidence to ensure that all services, infrastructures development, land release, and development are targeted to the size and demographic structure of the population of the region. Furthermore, following a completed census, the Municipality would have an updated housing inventory and a new baseline for its population after the Horse River Wildfire of 2016. The Municipality will also be able to refine the population component of its projected future growth and determine the impact on municipal services, facilities,

transportation systems, social programs, and municipal budgeting.

Strategic Plan Linkages:

Pillar 1 - Building Responsible Government

Pillar 2 - Building Balanced Regional Services