

Subject: Request to Proceed with the 2012 Municipal Census**APPROVALS:**

Glen Laubenstein, Chief Administrative Officer
Carol Theberge, Executive Director
Samuel Alatorre, Director

Administrative Recommendation(s):

THAT the Planning and Development Department be authorized to conduct a municipal census in 2012.

Summary:

A Council resolution is required to authorize a census.

Background:

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has conducted municipal censuses regularly over the last decade, with the latest census conducted in 2010. In 2011, however, the Municipality chose not to conduct a census in order to facilitate a federal census in collaboration with Statistics Canada.

This year the Municipality proposes to collect more detailed socioeconomic data to enhance the municipal databases used to guide decision making on public service delivery. This data will give Administration a clearer picture of the characteristics of the population as well as the current household composition and occupancy of various housing types in both the Urban Service Area of Fort McMurray and in the rural hamlets.

Conversations with stakeholders indicate the Municipality should focus on pursuing a better understanding of the shadow population, which generally includes the transient workers in the region and may represent a large demographic proportion; however, a review of the recent censuses conducted in the region reveals some challenges with large scale coverage and public engagement.

Following conversations with Alberta Municipal Affairs with respect to the challenges of conducting a municipal census in Wood Buffalo, Administration will request authorization from the Government of Alberta to use the online enumeration process, the shadow population count, and the extrapolation procedure supported by the *Municipal Government Act*. These elements will help improve response rates and obtain more thorough results for the 2012 Municipal Census.

In order to provide a regular census day each year, it is recommended that the enumeration process be in place by May 10, 2012 as a reference date for the Municipal Census. Census

operations may start earlier but not beyond this date. Census enumeration should be accomplished by June 30, 2012 in order to submit the municipal population affidavit to the Government of Alberta by September 1, 2012.

Budget/Financial Implications:

The budget for the municipal census has been included in the 2012 Operating Budget for the Planning and Development Department.

Provincial grant funding is based on the official population as approved by Alberta Municipal Affairs. Currently, grant funding for the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo is based on the official 2010 population and is \$60 per capita. Should Alberta Municipal Affairs not approve the 2012 Municipal Census results, grant funding will be based on the 2011 Federal Census number of 65,565 for the municipality.

Rationale for Recommendation(s):

Current population data is essential to a number of projects and initiatives that relate to economic growth and training, culture and quality of life enhancements, municipal programming, and improvements to municipal infrastructure and capital projects. Accurate population data is also required to update municipal socioeconomic databases and to improve social programs in the region.

The census information is not only critical to validating population forecasts; it provides the Municipality with an historical context for planning and administrative purposes. It is also important to note that other local organizations use the census information to support their initiatives.

The Planning and Development Department will coordinate specific actions with other municipal departments and industry stakeholders to address work camp populations, improve the strategy on public engagement, and track further demographic variables such as housing counts, population mobility and shadow population behavior.

Administration recommends that the Planning and Development Department be authorized to proceed with the 2012 Municipal Census and to continue to work closely with Alberta Municipal Affairs to arrive at a mutually agreeable outcome.