



Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act

Information Guide
2026

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Proposed Changes at a Glance

This page provides a high-level overview of the proposed changes in **Bill 28, the *Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026***.

The bill brings together a coordinated set of proposed updates to modernize municipal rules, improve clarity and consistency, and strengthen accountability. Rather than making one-off changes, the proposed legislation reflects how municipal systems work together in practice, from growth and housing, to transparency, to the governance of essential public institutions.

To help explain this approach, the proposed amendments are organized into five themes that reflect key areas of municipal life and the services Albertans depend on every day:

1. Growth and Housing – *How communities grow and new homes get built*
2. Assessment and Property Tax – *How properties are assessed and how local services are paid for*
3. Governance and Accountability – *Who is responsible and how local decisions are made*
4. Municipal Transparency – *how municipalities make decisions and operate day to day*
5. Public Institutions – *How essential public services are governed and protected*

Theme 1: Growth and Housing

- Aligns charter schools with other publicly funded school systems in access to reserve land
- Requires public reporting on development permit activity and timelines for municipalities with a population over 15,000
- Clarifies allowable off-site levy costs
- Expands off-site levy exemptions to charter and independent schools
- Supports automated permitting tools, and enables creation of a framework for Automatic Yes approvals
- Allows community design codes to streamline compliant developments
- Strengthens financial planning tools for housing management bodies
- Clarifies that provincially approved aggregate pit registrations prevail over municipal land-use decisions in defined circumstances

Theme 2: Assessment and Property Tax

- Prohibits higher residential property tax sub-classes based on occupancy status for Albertans
- Modernizes assessment rules for regulated properties
- Enables standardized assessment rates where appropriate
- Strengthens compliance and reporting requirements

Theme 3: Governance and Accountability

- Establishes a province-wide councillor accountability framework
- Introduces independent, third-party investigation of complaints
- Creates a roster of commissioners to hear appeals
- Requires complaints that may have a pecuniary interest to be referred to the courts
- Changes municipal viability votes to non-binding plebiscites

Theme 4: Municipal Transparency

- Requires public disclosure of municipal staff salaries above a threshold
- Allows specific identification of policing costs on property tax notices for eligible municipalities
- Refines province-wide expectations for councillor access to information
- Allows councils to manage substantial information requests through local policy
- Requires reporting to council when chief administrative officers use natural person powers outside established approvals
- Modernizes Business Improvement Area governance and administration

Theme 5: Public Institutions

- Amends the *Libraries Act* and *Libraries Regulation* to allow the Minister to initiate reviews or respond to complaints related to public libraries
- Allows ministerial guidance and non-binding guidelines to support public library governance
- Clarifies governance and oversight of municipally owned public utilities

Theme 1: Growth and Housing

When development rules are unclear or approvals take too long, it can slow housing construction, increase costs, and make it harder for communities to keep up with demand. Clear, predictable processes help municipalities support growth while maintaining local standards and community planning goals.

Bill 28 also includes related legislative changes led by other ministries that support housing and infrastructure development. These include updates to strengthen governance and long-term sustainability of seniors' lodge housing, as well as clarifications regarding how certain provincially approved resource developments interact with municipal land-use decisions.

Proposed changes

Improving access to land for charter schools

Charter schools accredited by the Ministry of Education and Childcare would be allowed to access municipal and school reserve land. This change aligns charter schools with public, separate and Francophone school systems, helping ensure families have fair access to publicly funded education options.

Charter schools are publicly funded schools within Alberta's education system that operate under a provincial charter and do not charge tuition.

Streamlining development approvals

Municipal Affairs will establish an "Automatic Yes" framework for low-risk development permits. These frameworks allow straightforward applications that meet established rules to move ahead without unnecessary delay, while higher-risk or complex projects continue to receive full review.

Improving transparency around permitting

Municipalities with more than 15,000 residents would be required to publicly report development permit activity and timelines. This gives residents, builders, and councils a clearer picture of how efficiently applications are processed and where delays may occur.

Reducing unnecessary studies and costs

The proposed changes would reduce unnecessary costs and delays in development approvals by limiting what municipalities can require and charge. This includes clarifying what costs may be included in off-site levy charges and expanding off-site levy exemptions for charter and independent schools. Future regulation will build on this work by examining the role of non-statutory studies in the development process to further streamline approvals.

Off-site levies are fees paid by developers to help fund infrastructure like roads, water, and wastewater systems needed to support new development.

Modernizing permitting tools

The proposed legislation supports the use of automated permitting tools. These tools can help municipalities process applications more efficiently, reduce paperwork, and improve consistency in decision-making.

Community design codes

The Minister would be able to set requirements for community design codes by regulation. Where adopted, these codes can help speed up approvals for developments that meet pre-established land-use and design standards, while preserving local decision-making.

Strengthening sustainability of seniors' lodge housing

Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services

Consequential amendments to the *Municipal Government Act* would support updates to the *Alberta Housing Act* aimed at improving the long-term sustainability of seniors' lodge housing. These changes would establish requirements for capital maintenance reserve funds for lodge assets, allow capital reserve contributions to be requisitioned from municipalities where appropriate, and strengthen governance practices for Housing Management Body boards.

Clarifying provincial authority over aggregate pit approvals

Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas

Proposed amendments to the *Municipal Government Act* would clarify how municipal land-use decisions interact with provincially approved aggregate pit registrations under the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*. A new section would require municipalities to approve a development permit where an aggregate pit registration has been approved by the province, aligning with existing provisions that give certain provincial regulatory approvals precedence over municipal planning decisions. This change helps provide greater certainty for aggregate development and supports the timely availability of materials needed for housing, infrastructure, and community growth.

Theme 2: Assessment and Property Tax

When assessment rules are unclear, it can undermine confidence in the system and create frustration for property owners and municipalities alike. Clear, consistent assessment and taxation rules help ensure everyone is treated fairly and that municipalities have stable, reliable revenue to deliver services.

Proposed changes

Fairness in residential property taxation

The proposed changes would prohibit higher residential property tax sub-classes based on occupancy status for Albertans, such as vacancy-style taxes. Similar homes for Albertans would continue to be taxed in the same way, regardless of whether they are occupied full-time or part-time. This reinforces a consistent, province-wide approach to residential property taxation.

Modernizing regulated property assessment

Assessment rules for industrial properties have remained largely unchanged since 2005. Proposed changes will enable these rules to be modernized, building on several years of collaboration with municipalities and industry to review the foundational policies for regulated assessment.

Standardized assessment rates

Greater use of standardized assessment rates would be enabled where appropriate for regulated properties. This increases the efficiency of assessment and improves predictability for municipalities and property owners.

Improved compliance and reporting

The proposed changes introduce penalties for owners who do not provide required assessment information on time. Timely and accurate reporting helps ensure assessments are fair and based on complete information.

The proposed assessment changes for regulated properties are forward-looking. New rules would apply only to newly reported properties, new additions to existing facilities, and new standardized rates developed as part of upcoming reviews for each regulated property type. Assessments for existing major facilities would remain unchanged.

The changes are anticipated to take effect January 1, 2027.

Theme 3: Governance and Accountability

Local government works best when roles and expectations are clear. Residents expect elected officials to act professionally, make decisions in the public interest, and be accountable for their conduct.

When standards are unclear or applied inconsistently, it can undermine confidence in local decision-making and distract councils from focusing on community priorities. Clear, province-wide expectations help support professionalism, fairness, and public trust in municipal government.

Proposed changes

Province-wide councillor accountability framework

The proposed legislation would establish a consistent, province-wide framework setting out standards of conduct for municipal councillors. The framework would cover matters such as pecuniary interest, unauthorized use of municipal assets, disclosure of confidential information, egregious behaviour, threatening behaviour and improper use of influence.

Future regulations and guidance will support implementation of the framework, including expectations for council meeting procedures.

Independent investigation of complaints

Complaints under the proposed accountability framework would be investigated by an independent third party selected by the municipality from a roster appointed by the province. This helps ensure concerns are handled impartially and consistently, without placing municipalities in the position of investigating their own councillors. Investigation costs would be funded by municipalities.

The Minister would also be able to initiate an investigation where necessary. In such instances, the investigation would be paid for by the ministry.

Appeals and outcomes

A roster of appeals commissioners would be appointed to hear appeals related to investigation determinations by council. The Minister would retain discretion to accept, reject, or adjust recommendations of the appeal commissioner, helping ensure outcomes are fair and proportionate.

Where a valid complaint may involve a pecuniary interest matter and a councillor refuses to resign, the matter must proceed to court.

Updates to municipal viability reviews

As part of a municipal viability review, residents may vote on whether to remain a municipality or dissolve into a surrounding county. The proposed changes would make these votes non-binding plebiscites, maintaining Cabinet's role in making final decisions. Making votes non-binding allows Cabinet to consider community input alongside sustainability and regional impacts.

Theme 4: Municipal Transparency

Albertans expect openness from their local government. Residents want to understand how public dollars are used, councillors need access to information to do their jobs, and councils need clear rules about roles and responsibilities.

Proposed changes

Public disclosure of municipal staff salaries

Municipalities would be required to publicly disclose the salaries of municipal staff above a threshold. This aligns municipal practices with existing provincial disclosure standards for the public sector and improves transparency around how public funds are used.

Clearer visibility of policing costs

Municipalities included under the provincial policing contract with the RCMP would be allowed to show policing costs as a separate line on property tax notices.

Managing large or complex information requests

Councils would be allowed to adopt local policies to manage substantial or complex information requests in a practical way. These policies could set thresholds, approval processes, and reporting expectations, helping municipalities balance transparency with administrative capacity.

Reporting the use of natural person powers

When a CAO uses “natural person powers” outside existing bylaws or council resolutions, they would be required to report that action to council in writing within 14 days, or by the next council meeting.

Exceptions apply for routine operations, personnel matters, emergencies, and legal advice. The reporting requirement would apply when a CAO initiates litigation on behalf of the municipality.

Natural person powers are the basic legal authorities that allow municipalities to act like individuals, including entering contracts, hiring staff, or taking legal action.

Modernizing Business Improvement Area (BIA) governance

Bill 28 would reduce unnecessary red tape for Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) by providing greater flexibility in board appointments, notifications, and budget adjustments, while maintaining accountability to the businesses that fund and rely on them.

Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) are local organizations made up of businesses in a defined area that work together to support and improve their commercial districts, often through events, beautification, and promotion.

Theme 5: Public Institutions

Clear, consistent rules help ensure public institutions reflect community values, protect vulnerable users, and operate with appropriate oversight. They also help municipalities manage essential services responsibly and plan for long-term sustainability.

Proposed changes

Public library reviews, complaints and guidance

Bill 28 would amend the *Libraries Act* and Libraries Regulation to allow the Minister to initiate reviews or respond to complaints related to public libraries. This provides a clear, consistent process to address concerns and support accountability across Alberta's library system. The proposed legislation would also allow ministerial guidance through non-binding guidelines to support public library governance.

Building on these changes, further work will support age-appropriate access to library materials with explicit visual content, with additional details to be introduced through future regulation.

Clarifying governance of municipal public utilities

Proposed amendments would clarify how municipalities govern and oversee municipal public utilities, such as water and wastewater services

The legislation would allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations, including:

- Directing one or more municipalities to transfer ownership or control of a municipal public utility to a public utility entity
- Establishing governance requirements for public utility corporations
- Providing additional direction needed to carry out the intent of the regulation

Next Steps

If passed, **Bill 28, the *Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026***, would bring proposed changes into effect at different times, depending on the provision. This phased approach helps ensure municipalities, boards, and service providers have time to prepare and implement the changes smoothly.

Coming into force

Upon Royal Assent

Unless stated otherwise, most of the proposed amendments would come into force on Royal Assent. This includes changes related to:

- Growth and housing
- Governance and accountability
- Municipal transparency

Regulated property assessment changes

Updates to the regulated property assessment framework are proposed to take effect on January 1, 2027. These changes would apply prospectively only, meaning:

- New rules would apply to newly reported properties or new additions
- Existing assessments for major facilities would remain unchanged

Regulations

Some elements of the proposed legislation would be supported by future regulations. This includes:

- Requirements related to community design codes
- Councillor accountability framework
- Governance frameworks for public utility corporations

Ongoing engagement

As implementation moves forward, Alberta's government will continue to work with municipalities, library boards, and other partners to support a smooth transition and address practical considerations as they arise.