



Village of Carbon Viability Review

Initial Public Information Summary

Municipal Affairs | April 26, 2026

Overview

In July 2025, the Minister of Municipal Affairs initiated a viability review for the Village of Carbon. A viability review helps municipalities determine their ability to continue as independent entities or to develop plans for long-term success.

As part of this review, Municipal Affairs prepares a Viability Review Report that examines key areas of the village, including community, local governance, administration, finances, infrastructure, and municipal services. The report draws on information from the Village of Carbon, Kneehill County, provincial records, and input from residents and property owners.

Once completed, the ministry will share the report with residents and property owners and make it available on the Government of Alberta website. Municipal Affairs will then hold a public information session to present report findings and answer questions. Following this session, village electors will vote on whether they want Carbon to remain an incorporated village and address identified challenges, or dissolve and become a hamlet within Kneehill County.

This summary reflects information synthesised from both the survey responses and the Initial Public Information Session.

Initial Information Session and Survey

Ministry staff hosted a public information session on February 4, 2026, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM in the Carbon Community Centre.

Alongside the public information session, Municipal Affairs also organised a survey for residents and property owners. The survey included 29 questions organised into six sections that aligned with the core areas of the review: community, governance, administration, services, infrastructure, and finances. The survey took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete and was open for 30 days, from February 3 to March 4, 2026.

The ministry received 30 responses. Of these, 24 respondents owned and resided within the village, while six resided in Kneehill County. Four respondents identified as business owners.

Municipal Affairs promoted the initial information session and survey on the Government of Alberta website, the Village of Carbon website, and in a letter mailed to property owners. The session was also promoted in the local newspaper, while the survey was promoted at the initial public information session.

Your Community

Public information session attendees and survey respondents described Carbon as a quiet and safe community with strong small-town character. Feedback emphasised friendliness, neighbourliness, and a strong sense of community, with residents noting the village's low crime, limited traffic, and slower pace of life.

Respondents highlighted the importance of local amenities like the school, library, post office, grocery store, restaurants, campground, swimming pool, curling rink, outdoor skating rink, Legion, seniors' lodge, and community hall. Residents saw these facilities as essential to community life and expressed a desire to see them retained into the future.

Respondents also valued the village's natural surroundings, including access to nature and wildlife, walking trails, and the Kneehill Creek valley. Ministry staff also heard of the village's proximity to regional centres like Drumheller and Three Hills as providing beneficial access to hospitals and other services while maintaining rural affordability.

While there were many community strengths, respondents also raised concerns about community division. Some described ongoing conflict, harassment, and misinformation as affecting trust and certainty about the village's future. In discussing dissolution, respondents were concerned about the potential loss of businesses, childcare and youth programming, and the long-term sustainability of local amenities. A small number of respondents reported no community concerns, with others viewing potential hamlet status as an opportunity for stability.

Carbon's identity and resilience are closely tied to its small-town character, amenities, and rural setting; social division and uncertainty about the future risk weakening community cohesion and confidence which are key factors in long-term viability.

Local Government

Survey results indicate limited interest in municipal governance. Sixty per cent of respondents indicated they would not be interested in running for municipal council, with many others being unsure. The information session revealed a similar pattern of

disinterest. This feedback suggests potential challenges to long-term local governance.

When asked whether they felt heard and informed by council, 33 per cent of respondents indicated they felt heard and informed, while 53 per cent indicated they did not. While some public information session attendees noted improved communication following the October 2025 general election, respondent feedback indicates there is room for improvement.

Respondents who felt heard and informed cited direct access to councillors, regular communication, and the ability to attend meetings and ask questions. Those who did not feel heard identified transparency concerns, including inconsistent information sharing, frequent closed (in-camera) meetings, and restricted or inadequate access to council meeting. Overall, respondents expressed a desire for greater council communications, particularly related to financial information.

On the note of dissolution, respondents expressed concern about the potential loss of local representation and reduced influence over decisions. Some respondents noted that county governance could offer improved consistency and reduce conflict.

Low interest in council service, combined with trust and transparency concerns, raises questions about Carbon's capacity to sustain effective self-governance.

Village Administration

Survey responses show divided views regarding the village's administrative capacity. Fifty per cent of respondents agreed that the village has capacity to manage day-to-day operations, while a similar proportion expressed strong disagreement.

Respondents cited concerns related to administrative instability, staff turnover, unclear communications about municipal matters including municipal finances, and administration responsiveness. A small number of respondents acknowledged that staff are working under challenging circumstances, but the majority highlighted emergent concerns.

Public information session attendees shared similar comments, noting that administration is relatively new to municipal operations and indicated that appropriate support and training could improve capacity.

Regarding access, 60 per cent of survey respondents stated they had reasonable access to the village office and staff, while 23 per cent did not. Overall feedback reflects divided confidence and ongoing concerns about long-term administrative sustainability.

Public feedback shows that there is no clear agreement about whether the village has the administrative capacity to operate effectively over the long term. While some residents believe day-to-day operations are being managed, many others are concerned that administrative instability and poor communications contribute to uncertainty about long-term resilience... This mixed feedback raises concerns about the village's ability to consistently meet community needs.

Municipal Services

Respondents identified potable water, wastewater services, and fire and emergency services as the most important municipal services, followed by snow clearing and road maintenance. Comparatively, respondents shared that parks and recreation and bylaw enforcement were less important.

Feedback on how well services were being delivered was mixed. Forty-seven per cent of survey respondents indicated village services meet their expectations, 27 per cent were unsure, and the remainder indicated the village did not meet their expectations. Public information session attendees generally viewed service delivery as satisfactory as well.

Respondents who were satisfied cited the reliability of core services, while those with concerns identified uneven service levels, transparency issues, and public works oversight challenges. Respondents also highlighted aging systems, capacity limitations, and sustainability as long-term challenges. If the village were to dissolve, many respondents expressed concerns that Carbon could become a lower priority for services.

Residents clearly prioritise core services like water, wastewater, fire, and emergency response, but confidence in how these services are delivered is mixed. While many residents feel basic services are reliable, others believe services do not meet expectations. This is partially due to aging infrastructure, limited capacity, and long-term

sustainability challenges. As a result, while current service delivery is generally seen as acceptable, uncertainties about future reliability and service priority continue to affect residents.

Physical Infrastructure

Survey responses indicate low confidence in the village's infrastructure. Forty-three per cent of respondents indicated infrastructure does not meet community needs, 33 per cent were unsure, and 23 per cent indicated that it does. Public information session attendees generally felt that infrastructure met community needs but identified concerns with management and maintenance.

In particular, respondents cited poor roads and sidewalks, aging water and wastewater systems, and deferred maintenance and limited information about infrastructure as contributing to uncertainty. Water and wastewater upgrades were consistently identified as the highest priority for future improvements, followed by road rehabilitation, demolition of unsafe or vacant village-owned buildings, and maintenance of existing facilities.

In addition to municipal-controlled infrastructure, some respondents also identified economic infrastructure, such as high-speed internet and access to a gas station, as important community assets. In the context of dissolution, respondents expressed concern about delayed repairs, funding limitations, and long-term investment priorities if the village became a hamlet.

While core services are largely reliable today, residents cited aging infrastructure, limited capacity, and uncertainty around long-term investment as significant risks, particularly if funding changes.

Finances

Respondents expressed significant concern regarding the village's financial condition. Key issues included high debt, overreliance on lines of credit, unclear financial reporting, and accountability gaps. Many respondents felt that property taxes and utility fees are high relative to service levels and the community's size.

Highlighted concerns linked to inefficiencies, limited reserves, and perceived inequities for properties receiving fewer services. While a small number of respondents indicated costs are manageable, overall feedback reflects low confidence in financial management and concern about future tax increases.

If the village were to dissolve, respondents expressed concern about losing local financial control, potential tax or fee increases, responsibility for existing debt, and reduced influence over county budgeting decisions. At the same time, others suggested county oversight could improve efficiency.

Financial uncertainty is a central concern shaping views on Carbon's future. Clear, transparent information will be critical for residents to evaluate whether remaining a village or dissolving best supports long-term stability and community priorities.

Conclusion

Respondents indicated a strong need for clear, accurate, and transparent information to understand what it would mean for the village to remain or to dissolve. Respondents wanted to know more about how the village compared to other similar municipalities so that they could place the municipality in context.

Respondents emphasised the importance of transparent financial projections, infrastructure audit results, and clear explanations of what services would be retained, reduced, or lost if the village dissolved. Many also requested side-by-side comparisons to other hamlets within Kneehill County.

A small number of respondents indicated that they had already formed a clear preference regarding the community's future and how they would vote. Others highlighted the role the review would play in addressing misinformation and presenting an accurate and unbiased accounting of the village for resident and business owner consideration.