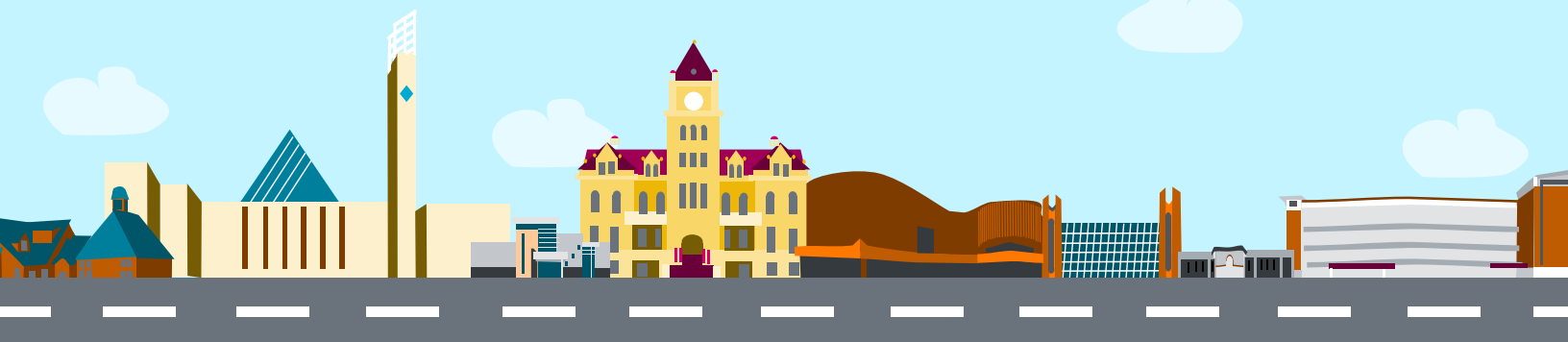




Village of Cremona Viability Review

Summary of Public Input

Municipal Affairs | April 8, 2026

Overview

The former Minister of Municipal Affairs initiated a viability review for the Village of Cremona in March 2025. The Minister initiated this review due to the resignations of a majority of council twice in a 12-month period, in addition to governance and operational concerns highlighted by the public.

This viability review allows electors to make an informed decision on the future of their community. The ministry collects and shares information from the village, the county, and residents in a viability review report. The report also includes recommendations for the long-term sustainability of Cremona, and what village residents may expect if the village dissolves and becomes a hamlet.

To inform electors and collect public input, ministry staff organised several engagement activities. This included initial and mid-review public information sessions and a survey.

This summary document reviews feedback collected from the public throughout the viability review process. It also highlights topics residents want to learn more about before they vote on the question of dissolution: whether the village should remain and make changes, or dissolve and become a hamlet in Mountain View County.

Part 1: Initial Public Information Session and Survey

Ministry staff hosted a public information session on November 19, 2025, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM in the Cremona Community Hall. Approximately 39 people attended the session.

Alongside the public information session, the ministry also published a survey. The survey included 36 questions divided into six sections. These sections correspond with the six themes discussed in the viability review report, including:

- Community;
- Administration;
- Infrastructure; and
- Governance;
- Finances;
- Services.

The survey took 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

The survey was open for 72 days, from October 25, 2025, to January 5, 2026. Forty-two respondents submitted survey responses.

The ministry promoted the initial public information session and survey on the Government of Alberta website, the village 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.

Community – Identity and Recreation

Survey results show strong community pride and identity. Whether it's the village's small-town feel (57 per cent of respondents), people and associations (45 per cent of respondents), or recreational opportunities (43 per cent of respondents), respondents believe that their community is valuable and important. Recreation stands out as a particular strength, with respondents noting the community's arena (55 per cent of respondents), Family and Community Social Services (FCSS) programming (52 per cent of respondents), and library (38 per cent of respondents).

Session attendees echoed these positive themes. Attendees emphasised the community's volunteer spirit, small town atmosphere, community associations like the Lions Club, Gold and Silver Club, and the arena and curling rink. Interestingly, many of these recreational assets are owned by third-party groups. This is relatively unique in Alberta, as most municipalities own their recreational assets. Should the village dissolve, recreation may be less affected due to this separation between municipal and community-owned recreation.

While many respondents and session attendees speak positively of the village, they also highlight concerns about community. These include concerns about village administration (36 per cent of survey respondents), a lack of development and growth (33 per cent of survey respondents), and village council (33 per cent of survey respondents). Many of these topics are addressed elsewhere in the survey. However, their prominence here underscores the importance village governance and municipal operations have on community spirit and identity.

Community – Change from Village to Hamlet

One of the largest concerns respondents have about community, should the village dissolve, is the loss of recreational services (24 per cent of respondents). Respondents fear they would lose FCSS or the library, which would weaken local community and identity. Session attendees feel similarly, worried that the

county may not support the community following dissolution.

To address these concerns, the viability review report may address recreation and how the county may support hamlet identity and community associations. The report may also provide information about the Cremona library as it is one of the few recreational assets directly impacted by dissolution.

Governance – Council Perspectives

While overall perceptions of the community are positive, respondents and attendees express significantly less confidence in municipal governance. For example, a majority (60 per cent of respondents) did not feel represented and heard by village council prior to March 2025 (the last time a council represented the village prior to the October 2025 municipal election). Among respondents who did not feel represented, 44 per cent cited a lack of communication, 32 per cent referenced council dysfunction, and 28 per cent felt that past councillors had ulterior motives. This distrust may impact future participation in government, with only 24 per cent of survey respondents and a minority of attendees indicating an interest in running for village council.

Session attendees were generally more mixed in their attitudes towards council. Attendees highlighted benefits like local representation, while also noting negative council perspectives and beliefs that council had 'secret agendas'.

On the note of local representation, some respondents (29 per cent) and attendees identified the March 2025 appointment of the Official Administrator (OA) as a point of contention. Some feel that it was an act of provincial overreach. While outside the scope of this summary, the province appointed the OA because of a loss of council quorum due to resignations. Following byelections to achieve quorum, the Minister appointed the OA as supervisor due to the governance and operational concerns highlighted by the public. At no point did the OA disallow or refuse any motion or decision of council.

Governance – Change from Village to Hamlet

Many respondents and attendees are concerned about how they would be represented in county government if they dissolve (36 per cent of respondents). This included questions about local decision-making and accountability, as well as several suggestions involving hamlet representation through a local advisory board. Session attendees had similar concerns, including the accountability of county councillors towards hamlet residents, and hamlet residents' access to locally elected officials.

To mitigate these and other related concerns, the viability review report may highlight how hamlet residents would be represented on county council and continue to have their voices heard. The report may also document the actions and processes that led to the initiation of the viability review, including the OA appointment. This may clarify the situation and dispel potential misinformation.

Administration – CAO and Staff

Like governance, survey respondents and attendees feel generally negative towards administration. This is driven by concerns about municipal transparency, accessibility, and a lack of confidence in administration's operational capacity.

Concerns about transparency are prevalent, with a majority of respondents indicating village administration does not adequately communicate with residents (66 per cent). Respondents believe administration does not share information with residents (36 per cent) and operates in an opaque manner under 'total secrecy' (33 per cent). Likewise, 42 per cent of respondents feel they do not have appropriate access to administration. Among respondents who feel this way, 69 per cent tie these feelings of inaccessibility to the municipal office being frequently closed, with 31 per cent also referencing unapproachable staff.

In the context of administration, capacity includes municipal staffing levels, skills and experience, and the ability to manage the day-to-day operations of the municipality. While more than half of respondents (62 per cent) feel village administration has some capacity to manage day-to-day operations, other respondents

(28 per cent) believe administration does not have the skills or experience to administer the village sustainably. This belief is frequently shared in the survey in multiple areas and has a far-reaching influence on how some respondents and attendees feel towards administration.

Session attendees highlighted similar themes regarding transparency and accessibility. Attendees shared that administration needs additional tools to proactively share information with the public, including going above and beyond to communicate with residents. Examples for improved communications include expanding the newsletter, updating the website, or implementing open forums. In discussing capacity, attendees stated that administration has insufficient staff, suffers from employee turnover, and does not have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Attendees were generally more pessimistic than survey respondents towards administration's capacity and ability to manage the municipality.

Administration – Change from Village to Hamlet

Respondents and attendees alike share similar concerns about administration if the village dissolves: What would happen to the village office, and would residents still have easy access to municipal staff? This is referenced by some respondents (26 per cent) and several attendees.

To mitigate this concern, the viability review report may outline how, and if, the county expects to maintain an administrative presence in the hamlet. This may include the county maintaining the village office as a satellite office, keeping staff in the community, or supporting transitional operations and communications after dissolution.

Finances – Taxation

The theme of finances in Cremona largely revolves around taxation. Many respondents (48 per cent) feel village taxes are too high, and a majority (52 per cent) believe their taxes and fees are not appropriate for the levels and types of services the village provides. Beyond taxation, respondents do not raise other major financial concerns, with the next most mentioned themes being limited access to municipal

financial information (19 per cent of respondents) and the village's limited tax base (14 per cent of respondents). This may indicate that outside of taxation, municipal finances are not a primary focus for most respondents.

Attendees repeated many of the same topics. They identified taxation as a primary concern, alongside a lack of transparent municipal financial data.

Finances – Change from Village to Hamlet

As expected based on previous comments, respondents and attendees are most concerned about potential property tax increases if the village dissolves and becomes a hamlet in the county. Nineteen per cent of respondents are also interested to learn what financial benefits the hamlet could experience as part of the county.

To mitigate these concerns, the viability review report may include a summary of property tax and utility rates in the county over the past 3 years. This may allow electors to compare county tax rates to village rates. If appropriate, the report will also acknowledge that hamlet-specific services and projects may affect property tax rates in the community, and that taxpayers cannot, and should not, necessarily use past rates to predict future county rates. The report may also provide a general overview of the county's financial status, and any potential financial impacts the hamlet might experience by joining the county.

Infrastructure – Physical Assets

Municipal infrastructure also emerges as a point of contention for survey respondents and attendees. A majority of respondents (55 per cent) do not feel village infrastructure meets current community needs. Of these respondents who do not feel infrastructure is adequate, 39 per cent cited poor road conditions, 36 per cent referenced unreliable potable water systems, 28 per cent believe infrastructure projects are not prioritised by the municipality.

A third of respondents (31 per cent) are unsure about the condition of village infrastructure. This may indicate a lack of public knowledge about the quality and state of municipal assets. The ministry will

provide this information to the public through the infrastructure audit, included as part of the viability review report.

When asked to list what infrastructure projects are most important for the long-term success of the village, respondents highlight similar infrastructure categories as noted above, including potable water and water treatment systems (45 per cent) and roads and paving (36 per cent). Some other respondents (21 per cent) also list maintenance as a priority, with some wanting the village to invest more in ongoing repairs to reduce 'band aid fixes'.

Attendees were split in their perceptions of village infrastructure. About half believe village infrastructure is adequate for the community, with the other half disagreeing. Attendees did, however, similarly believe that water and road infrastructure is important for the future of the community.

Attendees were also asked the best way to pay for needed infrastructure upgrades, with attendees leaning on provincial and federal grants, in addition to a bolstered tax base.

Infrastructure – Change from Village to Hamlet

In discussing infrastructure-related concerns, both respondents and attendees worry about how dissolution would impact hamlet infrastructure maintenance (17 per cent of respondents) and how the county would finance hamlet improvements (14 per cent of respondents). Maintenance concerns include how the county would fix potholes, pave roads, and respond to emergency waterline breaks. Regarding funding, concerns include whether hamlet residents would face special taxes to fund upgrades, how, and if, county funds would be used for hamlet improvements, and if the county would sell hamlet infrastructure to reduce costs.

To address these concerns, the viability review report may provide information on how the county currently manages and maintains infrastructure in other developed areas. This may include analysis of existing and proposed policies, practices, and standards. The report will also outline county council's general approach towards infrastructure funding and how funding is allocated in other hamlet-like communities.

Services – Core Community Needs

Services are a priority for respondents, with responses emphasising municipal services like fire and ambulance (57 per cent), water and water treatment (55 per cent), snow clearing and road maintenance (52 per cent) and wastewater (50 per cent). Respondents largely focus on services considered core to municipal operations, with other services like garbage collection (19 per cent) or bylaw enforcement (19 per cent) mentioned to a lesser degree.

While services play a critical role in the municipality, some respondents feel they could improve. For example, 48 per cent of respondents feel services do not meet expectations, with 25 per cent of those respondents focusing on maintenance and service-related communications. To improve services, respondents suggest administration take a more proactive role in upkeeping public spaces, increasing public work's capacity to monitor services, and sharing more information about service changes with the community.

Other respondents (33 per cent) feel municipal services meet community expectations. Some reasons these respondents feel this way include general satisfaction with service levels (43 per cent), consistent maintenance (21 per cent), and investment by administration into service improvements (21 per cent).

Attendees expressed perspectives similar to survey respondents. Core services like water, wastewater, and public works maintenance were important, with attendees split on whether services met community expectations.

Services – Change from Village to Hamlet

While some respondents (17 per cent) did not have specific concerns about services if the village became a hamlet, others worried about changes to service levels or reductions in service delivery (14 per cent). Attendees raised similar issues, with comments focusing on changes to snow removal, parks and green space maintenance, garbage collection, and potable water monitoring for health and safety.

To mitigate these concerns, the viability review report may review county policies for minimum service levels and standards. Specific services the report may analyse will include snow removal, water and wastewater monitoring, garbage collection, and parks and recreation upkeep. The report may also outline the county's staffing capacity and its ability to provide and maintain services in the hamlet.

Attendee Questions

At the public information session, attendees raised several questions about the viability review. Questions included why previous village councils were not held accountable to the recommendations of Cremona's 2013 viability review, the financial costs for the viability review, who is eligible to vote on the question of dissolution, and what might happen if the village remains, but the municipality is unable to meet the ministerial directives.

The viability review report may address some, but not all, of these questions. As a forward-facing process, the review will not investigate past actions of council or administration.

Profile of Survey Respondents

The survey asked respondents to provide select identifying information.

Primary Residency

A majority of survey respondents (76 per cent) indicated that they live in the village. The other respondents (24 per cent) indicated that they live in Mountain View County.

Property Ownership

A majority of respondents (71 per cent) indicated that they own property in the village.

Business Ownership

A minority of respondents (17 per cent) indicated that they operate a business in the village.

Part 2: Mid-Review Public Information Session

Following additional research and analysis, ministry staff hosted a mid-review public information session on March 25, 2026, from 7:00 to 9:30 PM in the Cremona Community Hall. While originally scheduled to finish by 9:00 pm, ministry staff elected to extend

the session by 30 minutes due to a large number of relevant attendee questions. Approximately 42 people attended the session.

The ministry promoted the mid-review public information session on the Government of Alberta website and in a letter mailed to property owners.

Council Representation

Initial engagement highlighted a divide between residents and council. As such, the ministry asked attendees if they felt their perspectives were being heard and acted on by council. While some attendees answered positively, a majority expressed the opposite. Specific comments included a perceived lack of transparency with council, with attendees noting administration's role in increasing tension.

In response, and to better inform electors so that they may make an informed decision on the question of the vote, the viability review report may clarify the roles and responsibilities of council and administration. The report may also include recommendations for the village if it remains with the goal of improving external communications and administrative accountability.

Recommendations if Remaining

On the note of recommendations, the ministry also asked attendees what changes the village should make over the next five years to become more viable. Suggested changes were broad, touching on topics like finances and revenue, council, and operations. Specific examples included investing in road and water infrastructure, pursuing more grants, reviewing tendering and procurement processes, and encouraging development. Attendees also highlighted changes to community engagement and adherence to the infrastructure audit's findings. These comments may be used to inform the recommendations in the viability review report.

Services if Dissolving

If the village dissolves, the county would be responsible for providing services in the community. The ministry thus asked attendees what non-utility services they would be most concerned about losing if the village dissolved. The most mentioned services included the library, FCSS, the volunteer fire

department, and public work services like garbage collection and nature trail maintenance.

Based on this feedback, the ministry may gather additional information from the county on how specific services could be impacted by dissolution. This would include the county's approach to library service, the fire department, and FCSS. County responses would be included in the report.

Additional Information

Lastly, the ministry asked attendees what other information they need to make an informed decision when voting. Many attendees highlighted the importance of the infrastructure audit, in addition to recommendations the ministry would expect of the village. Attendees also wanted to know more about village finances and the voting process.

To support electors in casting an informed vote, the viability review report may include a summary of the infrastructure audit, including estimated costs, along with a list of recommendations for the village if it remains. The report will also include updated 2025 financial information, as well as voting instructions.

Attendee Questions

Attendees asked many thoughtful questions during the mid-review public engagement session. Some questions focused on the Cremona library, including the county's timeline for creating a library board after dissolution, and how much information electors would have about county plans for the library before voting. Attendees also asked questions about the infrastructure audit, including why it was delayed and what funding was available to cover cost overruns. Some questions were financial, including tax rate comparisons in other villages in the region. Lastly, other questions dealt with miscellaneous matters, including if residents would have additional opportunities to provide input, and the timeline for when residents would receive the report vis-à-vis the vote date.

While many questions were addressed during the session, the ministry may provide additional details in the viability review report. The ministry will also highlight the pre-vote public information session as the final opportunity to ask questions and better understand the options.