

# Village of Empress Viability Review

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Initial Public Meeting  
April 13, 2025

Sharlene Brown, Municipal Viability Advisor  
Denise Lines, Municipal Viability Advisor



# Objectives

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Viability Review Process



Viability Review Report



Community Input



Questions

# A viability review will:

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Inform the community

Provide factual unbiased information

Focus on long-term solutions

Move the municipality beyond the present state

# What won't a viability review examine?

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Governance practices

Effectiveness of bylaws and policies

Not an audit of the village's finances

Past decisions of council and administration

# Viability Factors Commonly Found

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Significant infrastructure deficit

Lack of priority setting and long-term planning

Declining population

Lack of stable tax base

Depleting Accumulated Surpluses

Reliance on government transfers

# How are viability reviews initiated?

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# Why are we here?

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July 2025 - Sufficient Citizen Petition for viability review

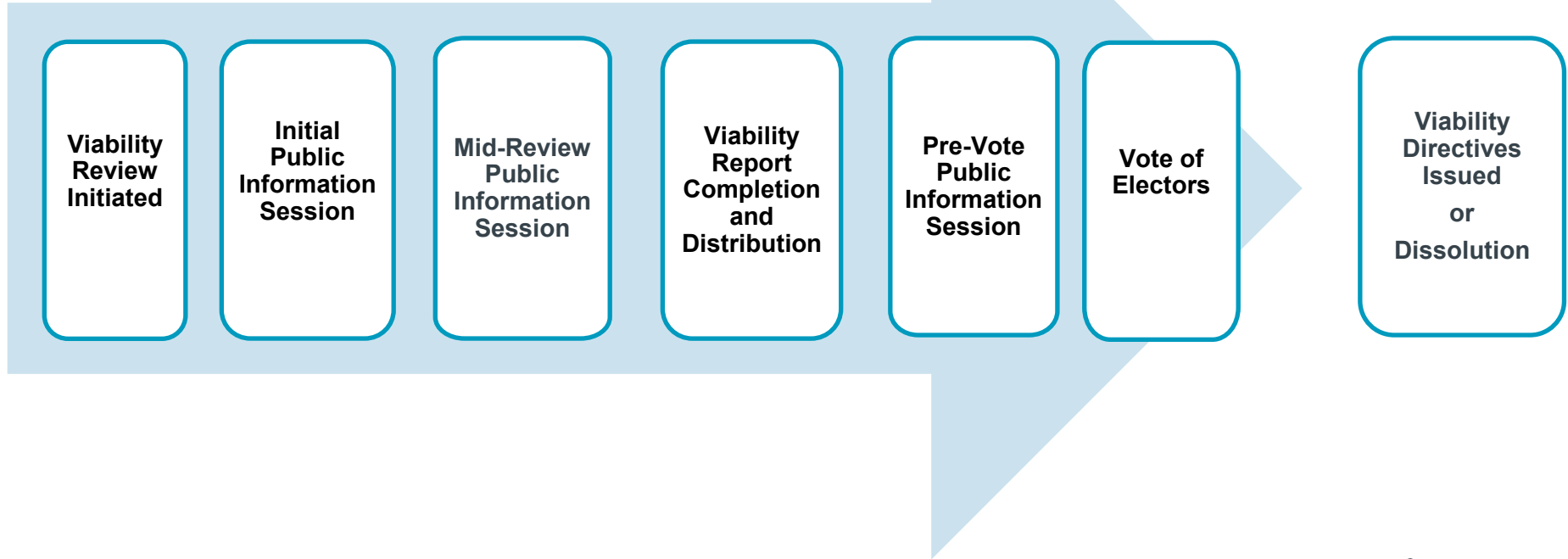
September 2025 - Minister requested viability screening

January 2026 - Minister ordered viability review

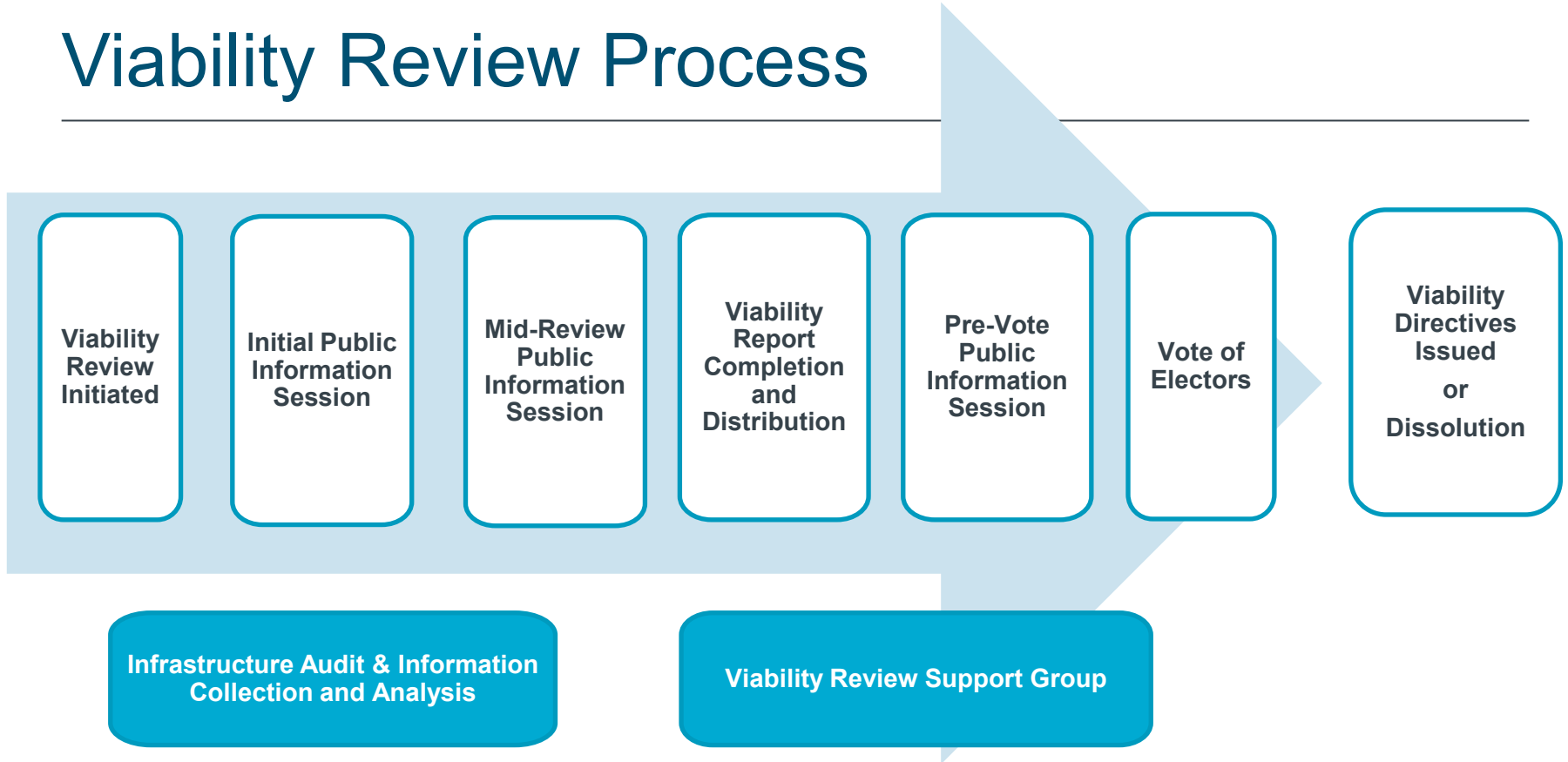
March 2026 - Minister approved Grant for Infrastructure Study

# Viability Review Process

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# Viability Review Process



# What is Reviewed?

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Community

Governance

Administration

Services

Infrastructure

Finances

# How you can participate

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- Three public information sessions:
  - Initial public information session
  - Mid-review public information session
  - Pre-vote public information session
- There will be a vote of electors of the Village of Empress

# Your Input

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- A survey for community feedback will be available at:

[www.alberta.ca/village-of-Empress-viability-review-survey](https://www.alberta.ca/village-of-Empress-viability-review-survey)

- The survey will be available until **May 15, 2026.**



# Questions?

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# Table Discussions

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At your table for each question:

- If you wish, answer the questions on the survey
- Share your responses

Choose the 3 top ideas at your table

Before we move on to the next question, we will ask you to share.

# Survey Questions - Introduction

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Where do you live?

Do you own property in the Village of Empress?

Do you operate a business in the Village of Empress?



# Survey Questions – Community

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1. What do you like most about living in Empress?
2. What are your concerns with living in Empress?
3. What potential changes, if any, might you be most concerned about if the community became a hamlet?



Pink Card

# Governance

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Addresses council practices and procedures, compliance with legislation, citizen engagement, and strategic planning.



Orange Card

# Survey Questions - Governance

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1. If you had the opportunity, would you be interested in running for municipal council?
2. Over the last 12 months, have you feel heard and informed by your Council?- Why or why not?
3. What governance change might you be most concerned about if the village became a hamlet.

# Administration

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Addresses the capacity of the municipality to operate on a daily basis and implement council decisions.



**Blue Card**

# Survey Questions - Administration

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1. Over the last 12 months, do you feel you have had reasonable access to the village office and municipal staff when needed?
2. Is the village meeting my expectations in communication with the residents and providing opportunities to engage on important municipal decisions?
3. What administrative changes might you be most concerned about if the village became a hamlet.

# Services

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Addresses the capacity of the municipality to provide essential municipal services that meet public expectation and applicable regulated standards



Grey Card

# Survey Questions - Services

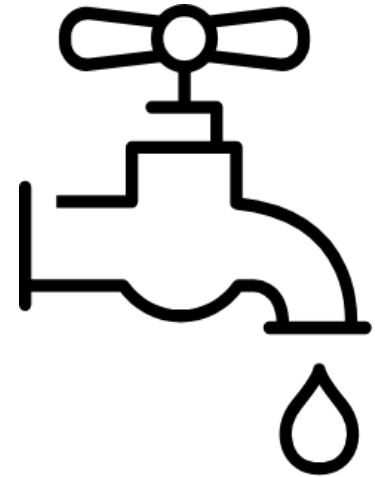
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1. What existing municipal services are important to you?
2. Does the village meet your expectation in providing services to the community?
3. What potential changes in services might you be most concerned about if the village becomes a hamlet?

# Infrastructure

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Addresses the municipality's capacity to effectively and efficiently manage its infrastructure.



**Purple Card**

# Survey Questions - Infrastructure

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1. Does the village's current infrastructure meet the needs of the community?
2. What current or planned infrastructure projects do you feel are most important for the long-term success of the village?
3. What infrastructure concerns might you have if the village became a hamlet?

# Finances

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Address the municipality's capacity to:

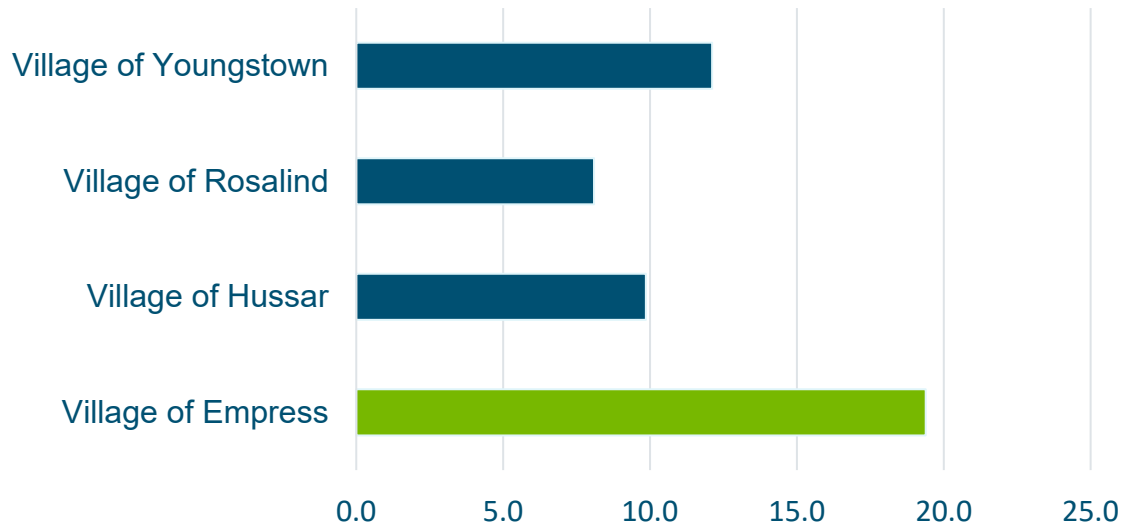
- generate and manage revenues (including property tax assessment and collection of taxes)
- sufficient to provide for necessary infrastructure and services now and in the future.



Green Card

# Survey Questions- Increasing Costs/Taxes

Residential Tax Rates **2024** in similar size municipalities in Alberta



Costs to operate municipalities all over are increasing. The graph beside is a visual comparing 2024 tax rates. 2024 Empress tax rate is a quite bit higher compared to other like municipalities. ***What are your ideas to address increasing costs?***

# Survey Questions - Finances

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1. What are your thoughts on the municipality's finances and taxation?
2. My Property taxes and utility fees are appropriate for the level and types of services the village provides?
3. What might concern you most about finances if the village became a hamlet?

# Survey Questions – More Information?

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1. What information do you need to make an informed decision on whether Empress should remain a village or become a hamlet in Special Areas?
2. Do you have any other comments for us to consider during the village's viability review?



**White Card**

# Next Steps

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- Municipal Affairs
  - Review comments from the survey
  - Collect and analyse information
  - Develop Viability Review Report draft
- Municipalities
  - Provide initial information for report draft
  - Initiate the infrastructure audit

# Questions?

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# Contact Information

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Website: [alberta.ca/viability-reviews-for-municipalities](http://alberta.ca/viability-reviews-for-municipalities)

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