

Background – Specialized Municipalities in Alberta

1.0 Overview

The purpose of this Appendix is to provide an overview of the specialized municipalities in Alberta. **Table 1** provides an overview of the history of formation and status change, reasons for status change and other characteristics. **Table 2** provides an overview of the number of urban service areas established in each specialized municipality by Order in Council. It has been observed that all urban service areas consist of well-established and, in some cases, historic settlement areas. As currently understood at the time of writing, there is no precedent of an urban service area that constitutes planned lands without concentrated existing settlement.

Section 2.0 of this Appendix provides a short description of formation requirements and process considerations.

There are six specialized municipalities in Alberta. According to a Municipal Affairs website:

“Specialized municipalities are unique municipal structures that can be formed without resorting to special Acts of the Legislature. Often, specialized municipalities allow urban and rural communities to coexist in a single municipal government.”

The history of formation across the Province illustrates that, of the six specialized municipalities in Alberta, half of them involved amalgamations of urban and rural municipalities either concurrently or as a precursor to status change (Crowsnest Pass, Lac La Biche County and the RM of Wood Buffalo).

Two specialized municipalities in Alberta contain, urban municipal jurisdictions within their boundaries. It is notable that both examples include either a revenue sharing agreement (Mackenzie County) or a robust collaboration and coordination agreement (Strathcona County) with its urban neighbours. Rocky View County is a neighbour to seven urban municipalities. (Calgary, Cochrane, Chestermere, Airdrie, Crossfield, Irricana and Beiseker)

Table 1: Overview of Specialized Municipalities in Alberta

Municipality	Key Dates	Rationale & Key Facts
Municipality of Crowsnest Pass	<p>2008 (OIC1/2008 Status change from a town to a Specialized Municipality)</p> <p>1996 (OIC362/95) formed as a town by amalgamating The Municipality of Crowsnest Pass with ID No. 6)</p> <p>1979 (Crowsnest Pass Unification Act, Chapter C-39) Towns of Coleman, Blairmore, Villages of Bellevue & Frank and ID No.5 formed Municipality of Crowsnest Pass</p>	<p>Established as a specialized municipality 29 years after the primary amalgamation of 5 municipalities.</p> <p>No separate urban municipal entity</p> <p>2018 Population 5,589</p>
Municipality of Jasper	<p>2001 (OIC279/2001) Jasper ID formed as specialized municipality</p>	<p>Specialized municipality status established 6 years after a process to</p>

	<p>1995 (MO 373/95) ID No.12) Jasper National Park divided into two Improvement Districts Includes rural and urban service area</p>	<p>divide Jasper National Park into two jurisdictions.</p> <p>The rationale for specialized municipality status was to provide for the unique needs of residents living within the town site of Jasper.</p> <p>No other urban municipal entities located in boundaries.</p> <p>Different tax rates for the Town of Jasper and the rest of the municipality</p> <p>2018 population 4,590</p>
<p>Lac La Biche County</p>	<p>2018 (OC 259/2017) status change from Municipal District to Specialized Municipality</p> <p>2007 (OIC 332/2007) Formed as an MD by the amalgamation of the Town of Lac La Biche and Lakeland County</p>	<p>Specialized municipality status established 11 years after amalgamation of Town of Lac La Biche and Lakeland County</p> <p>Rural service area equivalent to a municipal district and urban service areas equivalent to a town.</p> <p>Adjustments to the service area boundaries, authority for differentiated tax rates across the urban and rural service areas, removal of a previous requirement for two separate tax rate bylaws, and a continuation of the current council and electoral ward structure</p> <p>2018 Population 9,531</p>
<p>Mackenzie County Formally MD of Mackenzie No.23 Formally ID No.23</p>	<p>1999 (OIC 264/99) status change from MD to specialized municipality</p> <p>Agreements exist for the two urban municipalities that exist within boundary.</p>	<p>Evolution from improvement district, to municipal district to specialized municipality to address concerns about municipal government and management in a municipality that serves a number of unique communities in a very large territory</p> <p>Agreements with urban municipalities: Regional Service Sharing Agreement and IDP with the Town of High Level. County shares revenues from a service area (defined as a 40-kilometre radius around the Town) in exchange for provision of these services. An annual payment is equal to 25% for the property tax levied by the County against all properties in the service area or \$500,000, whichever is larger for any given year.</p> <p>In addition, the County funds the Town's capital projects at the following rates:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 20% for recreation projects; ▪ 30% for airport projects; and ▪ 50% for fire protection projects <p>The purpose of the IDP is to jointly control development in an area around the Town of High Level.</p> <p>County and Town of Rainbow Lake have a Revenue Sharing Agreement for provision of services to County residents based on % of property tax collected</p> <p>The Order in Council modified portions of the MGA relating to bylaws and resolutions for certain things require 2/3 of councillors present to vote in favour – procedures of the council of the new municipality, remuneration of councillors, property tax, changing number of councillors/boundaries of wards/ method of selection CEO, appointing/terminating CAO, adopting a budget, any other matter designated by the council</p> <p>2018 Population 12,512</p>
<p>Strathcona County</p>	<p>1996 (OIC 761/95) Status change from MD to specialized municipality</p>	<p>To provide for unique needs of a municipality that includes both a large urban center and significant rural territory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enactments applicable to a City apply to Sherwood Park ▪ Enactments applicable to a municipal district apply in the rural service area (program delivery, funding programs, grant eligibility, roads, culverts, ditches, drains, highways) <p>Robust intermunicipal agreement with Fort Saskatchewan to coordinate, collaborate and resolve disputes.</p> <p>\$12 billion worth of industrial projects completed, announced or under construction in Refinery Row on west side of Sherwood Park.</p> <p>2018 population 98,381</p> <p>2018 Sherwood Park population approx. 71,000</p>

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo	1995 (OIC 817/94) Amalgamated ID No. 143 and City of Fort McMurray to form a specialized municipality	<p>To provide for the unique needs of a municipality including a large urban centre and large rural territory with a small population.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For rural service area: program delivery/grant eligibility, roads, culverts, ditches, drains, and highways, deemed to be a municipal district ▪ For urban service area: program delivery/grant eligibility, roads, culverts, ditches, drains, highways, deemed to be a City <p>Differing Rates of Taxation: may by bylaw establish different rates of taxation for the urban service area and the rural service area for each assessment class or sub-class</p> <p>2018 population 111,687</p>
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(Source: Review of Provincial Orders in Council and <http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/cfm/MunicipalProfiles/basicReport/SMUN.PDF>)

Table 2: Summary of Urban Service Areas in Alberta

The following urban service areas were identified by Provincial Order in Council in the establishment of specialized municipality

Municipality	Number of Urban Service Areas	Area Name
Strathcona County	9	Antler Lake Half Moon Lake (est. 1950s) North Cooking Lake Ardrossan Hastings Lake Sherwood Park (est. 1955) Collingwood Cove (1950's) Josephburg South Cooking Lake
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo	8	Anzac Fort MacKay (1912) Janvier South Conklin (early 1900s)

		Fort McMurray (1870 Hudson Bay Post) Saprae Creek Fort Chipewyan (1788) Gregoire Lake Estates
Lac La Biche County	5	Beaver Lake Plamondon (1908) Hylo Venice Lac La Biche
Mackenzie County	3	Fort Vermillion (1788) La Crete (1914) Zama City

2.0 Formation and Consultation Requirements

A specialized municipality is created by an Order in Council (OC). The OC is approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister (s.96). The OC must describe the boundaries of the municipality, give the official name of the municipality, state the number of councillors, describe the district boundaries, and state how the chief elected official is determined (either vote of the electors or appointed by Council). Central to an OC is the inclusion of “*matters or conditions that govern the functions, powers and duties of the specialized municipality*” (MGA S.97 and 89(3d))

Section 94 of the MGA sets out the public consultation requirement for proposed specialized municipalities. The Minister may invite comments on the proposed municipality from:

- All local authorities that the Minister considers would be affected by the formation of the proposed municipality and from any other person the Minister considers necessary
- The public, and may conduct one or more meetings of the public to discuss the probable effects of the formation, and may hold a vote of these people who would be electors of the proposed municipality.