

Mix and Match

Municipal government is an interesting mix of everyday practical issues combined with responsibility for long term planning covering everything from infrastructure to environment. The Municipal Government Act (MGA), is the Provincial Statute that provides the authority and gives direction to what these local governments can or must do. According to the Act, the purposes of a municipality are:

- (a) to provide good government
- (b) to provide services, facilities or other things that in the opinion of council are necessary or desirable for all or a part of the municipality, and
- (c) to develop and maintain safe and viable communities

It's a tall order, and one that can be interpreted in many different ways. The document itself runs to almost four hundred pages dealing with taxation, transportation ,elections, financing etc. While very specific in some areas, other topics are left to the discretion of the citizens, otherwise known as Councillors, who have been given those tasks by the electorate.

In my last column I talked of the challenges we face as a result of our growing population. This puts pressures on local governments to put regulations in place that meet the needs of the current residents while ensuring future generations of the same quality of life that we enjoy.

A number of initiatives are underway to achieve that goal. One is the review of the Municipal Development Plan, a plan that is required under the MGA for any municipality with a population exceeding 3,500. The open houses that were held in January led off the process of public consultation. While they were well attended, the difficulty of reaching a majority of constituents became apparent. In spite of that good turnout, less than 2% of County residents actually took part in those meetings. Council is determined to ensure every member of Mountain View County has a chance to have input into this very important process. To that end, work on the document will continue over the next year, with an intention to adopt the new MDP in early 2012. The next step is a mail out survey to each resident to gather input based on the topics identified in the first round of meetings. The questions are also posted on the County website.