



THE TOWN OF
HINTON

Public Participation Policy
Council Approved
Administration (AD) #1209
Approved September 11, 2018
Last Revised: August 05, 2025
Next Review Date August 05, 2029

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 This Policy has been developed to define the circumstances in which the Town will engage Impacted Groups in Public Participation activities, and the approaches the Town will use to engage those groups, to assist Council and other municipal decision-makers in making informed, evidence-based decisions.

2.0 PURPOSE

- 2.1 In accordance with Section 216.1 of the Act, this Policy has been developed to recognize the value of Public Participation and create opportunities for Impacted Groups to be involved in a decision-making process.
- 2.2 This Public Participation Policy is in addition to, and does not modify or replace, the statutory public hearing requirements in the Act.
- 2.3 Council recognizes that good governance includes:
 - 2.3.1 Creating opportunities for Public Participation in the decision-making process;
 - 2.3.2 Supporting and encouraging Impacted Groups, government and community institutions, and others to work together in public engagement activities;
 - 2.3.3 Conducting adequate and inclusive project planning;
 - 2.3.4 Ensuring that the design, organization, and convening of the Public Participation serves a clearly-defined purpose;
 - 2.3.5 Providing Impacted Groups with the appropriate information and tools to engage in meaningful participation;
 - 2.3.6 Approaching Public Participation with an open mind, facilitating listening between groups, exploring new ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, and learning and applying information in ways that generate new options; and

2.3.7 Evaluating and incorporating outcomes from the Public Participation process.

3.0 SCOPE

- 3.1 This Policy applies to the Public Participation activities conducted by Administration, Consultants, and Council-appointed Boards and Committees.
- 3.2 Public Participation will be sought prior to decisions in which public perspective is deemed necessary for consideration in the decision-making process by Council or Administration. This includes but is not limited to:
 - 3.2.1 Establishing new programs or services;
 - 3.2.2 Reviewing and renewing existing programs or services;
 - 3.2.3 Identifying Council priorities;
 - 3.2.4 Gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the budget;
 - 3.2.5 Gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Town's strategic plans or business plans;
 - 3.2.6 Gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Town's capital plan and/or financial plan; or
 - 3.2.7 Fulfilling legislation or direction/decision mandated by Council.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Council:

- 4.1.1 Approve the use of Public Participation in accordance with this Policy or as decided by Council;
- 4.1.2 Consider input obtained through Public Participation in decision-making; and
- 4.1.3 Promote and support Public Participation without bias or lobbying the public.

4.2 Administration Leadership:

- 4.2.1 The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) will report findings of Public Participation to Council.
- 4.2.2 Directors are responsible for ensuring Employees understand the requirements of this Policy and that staff remain familiarized with, and are adhering to, this Policy.
- 4.2.3 Directors or their designates are responsible for ensuring proactive Public Participation activities are integral to programs, services, and initiatives, consistent with this policy and coordinated with the Communications Service Unit.

4.3 Communications Service Unit will:

- 4.3.1 Develop the necessary procedures to implement this Policy; and
- 4.3.2 Support all departments in the development and implementation of Public Participation Plans.

4.4 All Employees must:

- 4.4.1 Engage the Communications Service Unit at the start of a project to determine the Public Participation requirements;
- 4.4.2 Work with the Communications Service Unit to:
 - a) Develop Public Participation Plans in accordance with this Policy;
 - b) Implement Public Participation Plans;
 - c) Evaluate the effectiveness of the Public Participation Plan and the Public Participation Tools used in a particular circumstance;
 - d) Report 'What We Heard' and how the Public Participation results will be used, back to Impacted Groups;
- 4.4.3 Consider timing, resources, and engagement when developing and modifying Public Participation Plans; and
- 4.4.4 Promote and support Public Participation without bias or lobbying the public.

4.5 Third Parties:

- 4.5.1 Impacted Groups who participate in Public Participation processes are required to be respectful and constructive in their participation. Participants who are disrespectful, inappropriate, or offensive, as determined by Administration, may be excluded from Public Participation opportunities.

5.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION APPROACHES

5.1 The Town of Hinton Public Engagement Spectrum includes the following and is illustrated in Appendix A.

- 5.1.1 **Inform** – The Town will provide information to Impacted Groups and keep them informed throughout the project.
- 5.1.2 **Consult** – The Town will obtain feedback on alternatives or decisions from Impacted Groups. The Town will keep Impacted Groups informed, listen, acknowledge concerns, and give feedback on how their input influenced decisions
- 5.1.3 **Involve** – The Town will work directly with Impacted Groups to ensure their concerns and aspirations are understood, considered, and reflected in options. The Town will subsequently provide feedback to Impacted Groups on how their input was used.
- 5.1.4 **Collaborate** – The Town will partner with Impacted Groups on every aspect of the decision, looking to Impacted Groups for advice on solutions

and incorporating their recommendations to the maximum extent possible.

5.1.5 **Empower** – The Town will place final decision-making in the hands of Impacted Groups and implement what they decide.

5.2 The intent of Town of Hinton Public Participation is to be:

- 5.2.1 Purposeful – Clearly define specific areas of a decision where Impacted Groups can participate and what the Town hopes to achieve from the Public Participation.
- 5.2.2 Inclusive – Identify Impacted Groups. Recognize the views of Impacted Groups even if the Town disagrees with them. Remove/reduce barriers (language, location, age, income, connectivity, culture bias). Manage power imbalances.
- 5.2.3 Transformative – Choose methods that build understanding and collaboration across Impacted Groups and encourage dialogue and shared action. Encourage and recognize contributions. Integrate social, economic, and environmental perspectives.
- 5.2.4 Proactive – Build Public Participation into project planning. Communicate the scope of engagement to Impacted Groups. Provide information Impacted Groups need in timely and accessible ways. Respond to questions promptly. Consult Impacted Groups about how they would like to participate. Allocate resources. Evaluate to improve the process.

5.3 Public Participation Plans will include the following:

- 5.3.1 The nature of the matter for which Public Participation is being sought;
- 5.3.2 Identification of Impacted Groups;
- 5.3.3 How Impacted Groups may be affected;
- 5.3.4 The level of engagement to be undertaken;
- 5.3.5 Public Participation methods that will be used;
- 5.3.6 The time required for the engagement;
- 5.3.7 Who will make the final decision on the matter and the timing of that decision;
- 5.3.8 What information is required, if any, to participate; and
- 5.3.9 Available Municipal resources and costs of the engagement.

6.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REPORTING & EVALUATION

6.1 Information obtained via Public Participation will be summarized in a report and provided to the public.

6.2 The publicly available report will include, at minimum, the following:

- 6.2.1 A summary of the Project and Public Participation activities;
- 6.2.2 Results of the Public Participation activities;

- 6.2.3 How the Public Participation activities will be incorporated into Town decision-making;
- 6.2.4 The Town's next steps.

6.3 Information obtained via Public Participation will be compiled into a report for review by the Chief Administrative Officer (or his/her delegate) on a project-by-project basis. That report shall be provided to Council.

6.4 The report to Council shall include, at minimum, the following:

- 6.4.1 An overview of the Public Participation Plan and how it was developed;
- 6.4.2 A summary of the input obtained and how it will be used by the Town;
- 6.4.3 An assessment of the effectiveness of the Plan based on the level of engagement and the quality of input.
- 6.4.4 The report may include evaluation of the Public Participation process and recommendations for future Public Participation Plans.

7.0 RELATED MATTERS & REFERENCES

7.1 Municipal Government Act – Public Participation Policy Regulation

7.2 Town of Hinton - Public Communications Policy (AD-1204)

8.0 DEFINITIONS

8.1 **Act:** the Municipal Government Act, R.S.A. 2000, c. M-26, and associated regulations, as amended.

8.2 **Administration Leadership:** The Chief Administrative Officer and Department Directors employed by the Town of Hinton.

8.3 **Impacted Groups:** individual residents of the Town of Hinton, local and regional organizations and businesses, or other persons that may have an interest in, or be affected by, a potential decision made by the Town.

8.4 **Project:**

- 8.4.1 Establishing new programs or services;
- 8.4.2 Reviewing and renewing existing programs or services;
- 8.4.3 Identifying Council priorities;
- 8.4.4 Gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the budget;
- 8.4.5 Gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Town's strategic plans or business plans;
- 8.4.6 Gathering input or formulating recommendations with respect to the Town's capital plan and/or financial plan; or
- 8.4.7 Fulfilling legislation or direction/decision mandated by Council.

- 8.5 **Public Participation:** includes a variety of non-statutory opportunities where Impacted Groups receive information to provide input that is considered by Council or Administration in the decision-making process. In return, the Town of Hinton makes specific promises to the Impacted Groups. Those promises are in keeping with the amount of impact that the decision being made will have on the community.
- 8.6 **Public Participation Plan:** a plan that includes the Public Participation objective, scope of work, understanding of the people involved, the Public Participation Methods to be used, implementation activities, resources available, costs of the Plan, plus reporting, evaluating, and learning actions.
- 8.7 **Public Participation Methods:** the 60-plus tools that may be used, alone or in combination, to create Public Participation opportunities. These include but are not limited to:
 - 8.7.1 Sharing information: Hotlines, information kiosks, pop-up stands, public displays, briefings, social media posts, websites, progress reports, newsletters, direct mail.
 - 8.7.2 Collecting and compiling input: Comment forms (online, hard copy), resident reference panels, interviews, social media discussions, surveys, questionnaires, voting, door-knocking.
 - 8.7.3 Bringing people together: Public meetings, open houses, symposia, tours, field trips, revolving conversations, fish bowl processes, card storming, interactive online tools, workshops, design charette, focused conversations, study circles, World Café, participatory budgeting, deliberation, advisory groups.
- 8.8 **Town of Hinton Public Engagement Spectrum:** the spectrum of engagement the Town will seek from Impacted Groups, from least impact of the decision on the community (left) to a decision which creates the highest impact on the community (right). It includes Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower.

9.0 APPENDICES, PROCEDURES, & FORMS

- 9.1 Town of Hinton Public Engagement Spectrum
- 9.2 Public Participation Go/No Go Assessment
- 9.3 Public Participation Plan Template

10.0 REVISION CONTROL

- 10.1 This Policy must be reviewed every four years.
- 10.2 Upon Council approval, all former versions of this Policy are hereby rescinded.

Date	Revision
August 05, 2025	 Jordan Panasiuk, Chief Administration Officer