

August 16, 2021

Honourable Ric McIver
Minister of Municipal Affairs
Office of the Minister
Municipal Affairs
132 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Sent via email: minister.municipalaffairs@gov.ab.ca

Dear Minister McIver:

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Town of Okotoks' perspectives on the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board (CMRB) Growth Plan (GP) and supporting Servicing Plan (SP) and Regional Evaluation Framework (REF). Members of the Board have been working diligently since its inception in 2018 to further its mandate through the preparation of these plans. Following the preparation of numerous background studies related to land use and servicing, the Board unanimously supported the selection of consulting firm HDR | Calthorpe to lead the preparation of these plans.

Recognizing that the benefits and challenges associated with growth extend beyond municipal boundaries, the CMRB was established by the Province and tasked with developing a GP, SP and REF to promote enhanced collaboration and coordination in how future growth and infrastructure investment is accommodated throughout the Calgary Metropolitan Region. The objectives and required contents of the GP and SP were clearly laid out in the CMRB regulation to guide the creation of a comprehensive and integrated regional growth and servicing plan for the region.

It is the Town of Okotoks' perspective that the GP, SP and REF submitted to you on June 1st have fulfilled the requirements set out in the CMRB regulation and will support the long-term economic, environmental, and social sustainability of the Calgary region. A key component of the Growth Plan, as required by the CMRB regulation, is the identification of growth areas and corresponding development densities. It is the Town's belief that the Province has directed this region to declare growth areas and corresponding development densities to better manage its limited natural resources and to promote fiscal sustainability as it relates to infrastructure investment.



To that end, the GP directs the majority of population and employment growth to be accommodated within defined growth areas in both urban and rural municipalities, while also providing flexibility for modest population and employment growth to occur outside of these areas. Additionally, the GP provides opportunities for member municipalities to bring forward proposals that do not align with the GP, but may ultimately benefit the region. It should be noted that the GP, upon receiving ministerial approval, will only apply to new plans for growth or regionally significant amendments to existing plans. Existing statutory plans in place prior to approval of the GP will be considered grandfathered and can develop under their pre-existing approval.

The GP, SP and REF represent a culmination of over three years of efforts from member municipalities, technical experts, and a robust public and stakeholder engagement campaign. Plan policies are reflective of the diverse perspectives of participating municipalities while also considering the best interests of the region as a whole. Ministerial approval of these plans is a critical step in facilitating a more consistent approach to managing growth in the Calgary region in order to promote greater collaboration, optimize the use of infrastructure, reduce servicing costs, and support more efficient use of the region's land and natural resources. Without these plans, there is a risk that municipalities will continue to expand and develop in isolation, focusing more on local needs and opportunities of today, rather than the broader regional interests of tomorrow.

Some municipalities have expressed fears that implementation of these plans will limit opportunities for growth and development. The Town of Okotoks has a different perspective. The GP, SP and REF were developed in collaboration with all member municipalities and provide abundant opportunity and flexibility to accommodate future growth across the region that reflects both local contexts and broader regional interests. Ministerial approval of these inaugural plans, as presented, will facilitate continued collaboration on matters of regional significance to ensure that the Calgary region continues to be a great place to live, play, and work as it welcomes the next million residents.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

Florence Christophers
Deputy Mayor