

DRAFT LAND-USE FRAMEWORK

PUBLIC Questions & Answers

What is the Draft Land-use Framework?

The *Draft Land-use Framework* sets out an approach to better manage public and private lands and natural resources to achieve Alberta's long-term economic, environmental and social goals. The framework provides a blueprint for land use management and decision-making that addresses Alberta's growth pressures.

Why does Alberta need a land-use framework?

Alberta has enjoyed record prosperity. But this prosperity has brought new challenges and responsibilities. Today's rapid growth in population and economic activity is placing considerable pressure on Alberta's landscapes.

Oil and gas, forestry and mining, agriculture and recreation, housing and infrastructure - all compete to use the land. This not only increases the number of conflicts between competing user groups, it often stresses the environment too. Our land, air and water are not unlimited.

It's clear that we all need to work together to better manage growth on a provincial, regional and local basis, for the benefit of all Albertans. We need to ensure our land—and all the activities it sustains—is managed responsibly for those who come after us. Our current land management system, which served us well historically, is in danger of being overwhelmed by the scope and pace of activity.

The Draft Land-Use Framework is a significant step forward in the evolution of land-use planning and decision-making in Alberta.

What are the key strategies in the Draft Land-use Framework?

The *Draft Land-use Framework* proposes six key strategies to improve land-use decision-making in Alberta:

- Establish six new land-use regions with a requirement to develop regional plans for each.
- Create a Cabinet Committee supported by a Land-use Secretariat and establish a Regional Advisory Council for each region. The members of the councils will represent provincial, municipal, industry, non-government groups; aboriginal communities, and other relevant planning bodies with the region.
- Use a cumulative effects approach at the regional level to manage the impacts of development on air, land and water.
- Develop new policy tools for conservation and stewardship on private and public lands.
- Establish an information-gathering, monitoring and reporting system to support planning and decision-making.
- Include Aboriginal Peoples in land-use planning.

How will the Draft Land-use Framework improve sustainability in the province?

The purpose of the Land-use Framework is to manage growth, not stop it. It promotes responsible growth, a future with plentiful opportunities and a health environment.

The framework will improve sustainability through:

- greater integration of provincial policies and ensuring provincial interests are reflected in land-use decisions;
- providing better tools, processes and resources for decision-makers;
- incorporating more scientific data into land-use decision-making; and
- seeking greater certainty for all stakeholders through the application of regional plans.

Will there be opportunities for stakeholder input on the development of regional plans?

The Alberta government is committed to building regional plans with the participation of the people who live within the regions.

The proposed Regional Advisory Councils will consist of members representing the range of interests within each region; include provincial and municipal governments, industry, non-governmental groups, and Aboriginal communities. One of the responsibilities of the Regional Advisory Councils is to help ensure that the public is also engaged in the process.

The Alberta government will be developing terms of reference which will set out planning process requirements, including requirements for consultation and draft plan reviews.

How long will the Regional Advisory Councils be in place?

The Regional Advisory Councils are temporary in nature and will only exist for the amount of time required to develop the regional plans. Once the regional plan has been developed and approved by the Cabinet Committee, there is no longer a need for the advisory councils to be in place. Subsequent issues relative to the implementation of the regional plans will be addressed by the Land-use Secretariat and the appropriate government agencies.

How long will the regional plans be in effect?

Regional plans will be reviewed every five years - with plan updates and reports on implementation - and a complete review will occur every ten years. This approach allows the regional plans to be updated and reflect new policies and initiatives adopted by the province.

What are the six regions proposed in the Draft Land-Use Framework?

The Draft Land-use Framework proposes six regions that align with the province's major watersheds because decisions made regarding land-use impacts our water resources – both water quality and water quantity.

The six proposed regions are:

- North
- North – East
- North – Central
- North – West
- South – Central
- South

What region am I in?

The best way for you to understand which region you are in is for you to take a look at the regional map found on the website www.landuse.gov.ab.ca, or in a copy of the Draft Land-use Framework document.

The Draft Land-use Framework will use a cumulative effects management approach, what is this?

Our land-use policies and plans must be updated to reflect the changing and increasingly complex dynamics in the region and our growing understanding of ecological processes.

The province is moving toward a cumulative effects approach that looks at the potential impacts of all projects within a region, rather than at the impact of development on a project-by-project basis. Cumulative effects management determines the capacity of the environment and ecosystem to support the effects of all activities, and identifies thresholds for the air, land, water and biodiversity. Furthermore, cumulative effects management involves integrating environmental, social and economic objectives to minimize risks and maximize benefits on a regional scale.

How will the Land-use Framework impact municipalities and their decision-making processes?

An effective land-management system recognizes that planning and decision-making must take place at different levels of government and these decisions need to be aligned.

The Alberta government has primary responsibility for making decisions that meet the economic, environmental and social goals of all Albertans. However, in the face of increasing pressures and conflicts, the Alberta government needs to ensure these provincial interests are addressed at a local scale.

Alberta has a strong tradition of local government and local authority. The Draft Land-use Framework leaves local decision-making authority with the same officials who currently exercise it, but in the future, these decisions will have to be aligned with provincial policy set out in the regional plans.

How will the Land-use Framework impact private landowners?

One of the guiding principles of the framework is that land-use decisions will respect the laws of property ownership and the positive role of free markets in making societal choices regarding the management of the land.

Municipalities already have the ability to control the subdivision of land under the MGA. Landowners can only subdivide with municipal approval. Regional plans will set the context for these decisions in the future and could identify areas where the fragmentation and the loss of agricultural land needs to be addressed.

The government will support the development of market-based instruments to encourage private landowners to help achieve conservation goals. Market-based incentives and tools can provide a way for private landowners to receive some monetary benefits for the ecological goods on their land.

How will this impact existing approvals and licences?

Existing contractual commitments such as approvals and licences will be honoured. However, planning decisions on future development will need to be aligned with provincial policies and directions. Moving forward requires some hard decisions and some trade-offs.

How does the framework affect recreational activity on public land?

The Draft Land-use Framework identifies the need to work extensively with members of the recreational communities and other key stakeholders to develop a comprehensive recreational strategy to better manage the growing recreational pressures and activities on public land. The goal of the recommended recreational strategy is to ensure Albertans continue to have a wide variety of recreation opportunities on public lands but at the same time ensure that the impact on our natural environment is minimized, reduce conflicts and increase cooperation.

How long will it take to implement the framework?

The government has established a goal of completing the six regional plans described in the framework by 2012.

The province has identified four key priorities in the framework. These priorities are: the completion and implementation of metropolitan plans for the Capital and Calgary regions, and the completion of the Southern Alberta Regional Plan as well as the Northeast Alberta Regional Plan.

Work is already proceeding on metropolitan plans for Calgary and the Capital Region, how will they be integrated into the regional land-use plans?

Given the immediate growth pressures in the Capital and Calgary regions, work had to commence with the development of their respective metropolitan plans. These communities are defining the type of future they want. The provincial government expects that the metropolitan plans will reflect provincial interests and priorities.

How can I get a copy of the Draft Land-use Framework and Public Feedback Survey?

The survey and draft framework can be accessed online at www.landuse.gov.ab.ca. Print versions of the survey and the draft framework can be obtained on the website or by calling 310-4455 to have a package mailed. You can also pick up the draft framework and survey at your MLA constituency office.

When do I have to have the Public Feedback Survey completed?

The government is asking Albertans to provide their input on the Draft Land-use Framework before June 20.

What's going to happen to the information I provide in the survey?

The surveys will be compiled by an external company for the Government of Alberta. The information you provide in the survey is very important as it will be considered in the finalization of the Land-use Framework.

Who do I talk to if I need more information?

You can e-mail: LUF@gov.ab.ca, or call 310-4455.