

## How You Can Participate More Effectively

- **Learn the issues that are important in your community** and understand the particular decision being made by Council.
- **Know the date and time of the meeting or public hearing.**
- **Register in advance** if you intend to speak.
- **Bring copies of written materials** for each Council member. Your municipal office can tell you how many copies you will need.
- **Keep your presentation within the time allowed** and focused on the topic at hand.
- **Remain polite and civil.** Members of the public can be asked to leave meetings if their conduct is not respectful.
- **Respect the views of others.** There are often several perspectives on an issue. Council must make decisions that are in the best interest of the whole community.

## Access to Information

Citizens need access to information on the way their municipality is operated in order to effectively participate in municipal-decision making.

Some of the documents that citizens are required to have access to under legislation are:

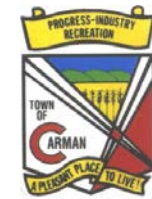
- Assessment rolls
- Budgets
- Financial statements
- Council meeting minutes
- By-laws and resolutions of Council

Information on how to access other documents or information may be established in your municipality's access to information policy.

Your municipal office can answer any questions you may have about access to information in your municipality.

**For more information on participating in municipal decision-making, contact your municipal office.**

# Participating in Municipal Decision- Options for Citizens



**TOWN OF CARMAN**

**12-2<sup>ND</sup> Avenue SW, Box 160**

**Carman MB R0G 0J0**

**204-745-2443**

## The Importance of Participation

Municipalities make decisions everyday that affect their citizens. Citizens expect their municipalities to make decisions that are in the best interest of their communities.

For example, your municipality makes decisions on:

- Property taxation
- Municipal services (water, sewer, snow clearing, etc.)
- Land development / zoning
- Infrastructure (roads, streets, bridges, etc.)

Citizens have an important role in the municipal decision-making process and you can participate in different ways.

### Attend a Council Meeting

Municipal Council meetings are open to the public. This provides an opportunity for you to hear the debate on municipal issues and know Council's decisions.

Municipalities must prepare a formal agenda for each Council meeting. The agenda will include an opportunity for citizens to present their views directly to Council as delegations.

### Speak as a Delegation

Delegations at Council meetings are usually required to register with the Chief Administrative Officer ahead of time so that adequate time is scheduled to hear delegations and the meeting proceeds smoothly.

## Present at a Public Hearing

Municipal Councils are required to hold public hearings to obtain public input for matters that have a significant impact on citizens and property owners in the municipality (eg. annual municipal budget, proposals for local improvements or special services).

At the hearing, Council will typically present the proposal that is being considered. Citizens can then share their views about the proposal and ask questions of Council.

Citizens are encouraged to register with the Chief Administrative Officer if they would like to present at a public hearing.

### Attend a Public (Town Hall) Meeting

Council can hold a public or "town hall" meeting on any matter it chooses, even when a public hearing is not required.

Your municipality might have a public meeting when Council is considering decisions that have a direct impact on citizens and property owners in the municipality (eg. a recycling program or the building of a new recreation centre).

Often, these meetings are more informal than public hearings. They may be set-up so citizens can come and go, or have an open floor to ask questions of Council.

The outcome the meeting, unlike a regular Council meeting or a Public Hearing, is not binding on Council. Instead, these meetings are done to create community awareness and get a sense of public support for a proposal or decision.

## Know How to Participate

Your municipality's Procedures By-law establishes rules for how meetings and public hearings will take place. This ensures that municipal business is undertaken in a transparent manner and citizens know how they can participate.

The By-law also establishes rules of conduct for the meeting and for public hearings. Rules of conduct apply to Council members and citizens.

### Your Municipality's Procedures By-law may have rules about:

- When citizens may register as a delegation
- Time limits for speaking by Council members and citizens
- Limits to the number of delegations to be heard if Council is satisfied that the presentations are the same or similar
- Maximum number of people allowed in council chambers
- Audio taping or video recording meetings by media or citizens
- Citizen conduct at the meeting (eg. rules about signs or applause in the meeting)
- Consequences for improper conduct by Council members and citizens (eg. a person acting disrespectfully can be asked to leave)

**Your municipal office can answer any questions you may have about meeting and public hearing rules.**