

Village of Clyde Viability Review

What We Heard and Viability Determination Report

January 2015



Village of Clyde Viability Review Team

Viability Review Team
Village of Clyde Viability Review
Alberta Municipal Affairs
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Executive Summary

In January 2013, following receipt of a sufficient petition from electors of the Village of Clyde requesting that a dissolution study be undertaken for the village, the Minister of Municipal Affairs advised that a study would proceed in the form of a viability review led by a viability team.

The Village of Clyde Viability Review began in May 2013 with the establishment of the Village of Clyde Viability Review Team tasked with leading the Village of Clyde Viability Review. The team consists of one elected and one administrative official each from the Village of Clyde and from Westlock County, and one representative each from the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the Alberta Rural Municipal Administrators Association, the Local Government Administration Association, and representation from Alberta Municipal Affairs.

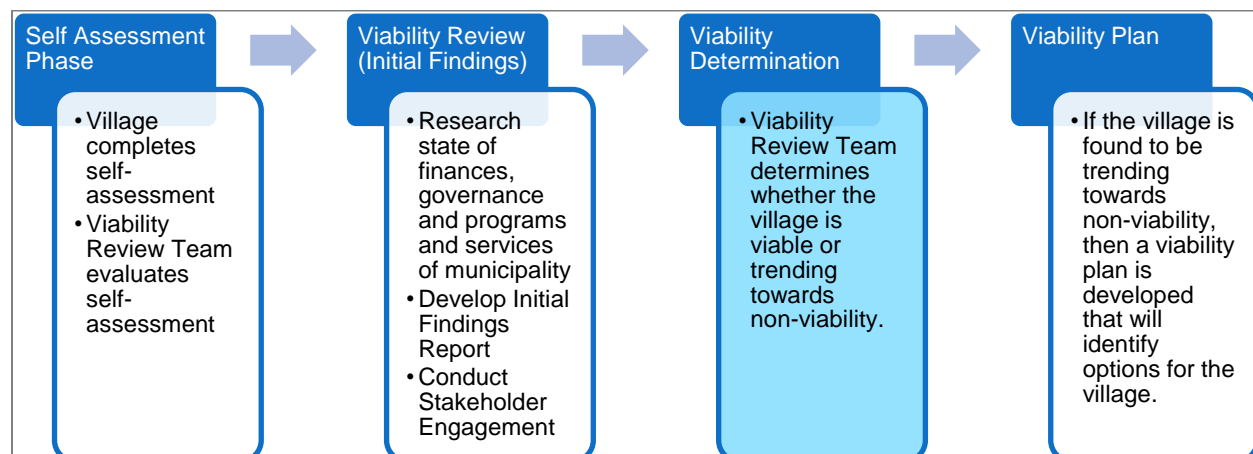
In October 2014, an Initial Findings Report, prepared by the Viability Review Team, was provided to the public. The report outlined the village's performance on key measures of sustainability and indicators of viability, as outlined in the Municipal Sustainability Strategy.

The viability review team was tasked with leading stakeholder engagement with residents, property owners, and other stakeholders. In addition to the stakeholder input form distributed to residents and property owners in March 2013, the Viability Review Team held a public meeting in the Village of Clyde on October 23, 2014 to gather additional information from stakeholders to assist with the team's determination of the viability of the Village of Clyde.

The information compiled in the Initial Findings Report and comments gathered from stakeholders were reviewed and analyzed by the Village of Clyde Viability Review Team when making a viability determination for the Village of Clyde. The Village of Clyde Viability Review Team has determined that the Village of Clyde is trending towards non-viability.

During the upcoming months, the viability review team will develop options that will allow Clyde to become viable in the long-term. These options may include changes to the way that Clyde is governed and administered, how Clyde works with its municipal neighbours, and whether Clyde should be dissolved and become a hamlet in Westlock County.

Residents will be informed of project updates and further stakeholder engagement will take place once the Viability Plan is drafted.



Section 1 - What We Heard - a summary of public input

The What We Heard section provides stakeholders of the Clyde community with an overview of the public input collected as part of the Village of Clyde Viability Review.

Input was gathered through:

- the Stakeholder Input Form distributed to residents of the Village of Clyde on March 6, 2013;
- table discussions at the public meeting held on October 23, 2014; and
- the Stakeholder Engagement Workbook distributed on October 23, 2014.

The viability team was provided with a verbatim listing of all written comments received throughout the viability review for its consideration when making a viability determination.

The What We Heard section is divided into two parts:

Part 1 – Input from stakeholder input forms

A summary of the input gathered from the stakeholders in response to the Stakeholder Input Form mailed to village residents on March 6, 2013.

Part 2 – Input from the public meeting and written submissions

A summary of the input received through the table discussions at the public meeting held on October 23, 2014, the completed Stakeholder Engagement Workbooks, and other written submissions.

Please note that comments are not recorded verbatim in the report:

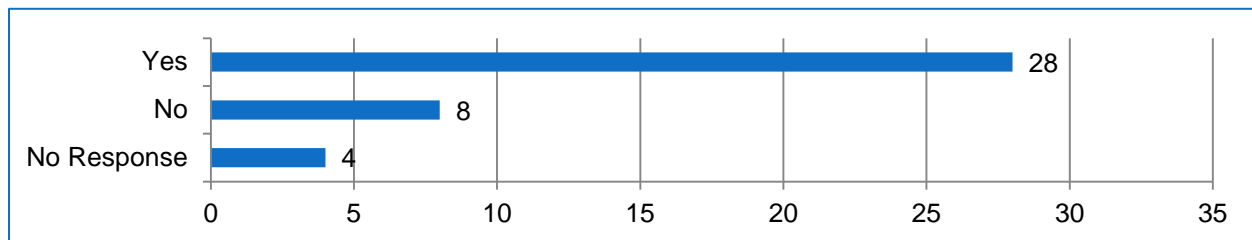
- Comments of a similar nature have been summarized. The numbers in parentheses, at the end of comments, indicate the frequency the comment was submitted.
- Comments have been edited to improve clarity (e.g. spelling and grammar); and
- References to specific persons have been deleted to protect the anonymity or privacy of contributors and named individuals.

Part 1 – Input from the Village of Clyde Viability Review Stakeholder Input Forms

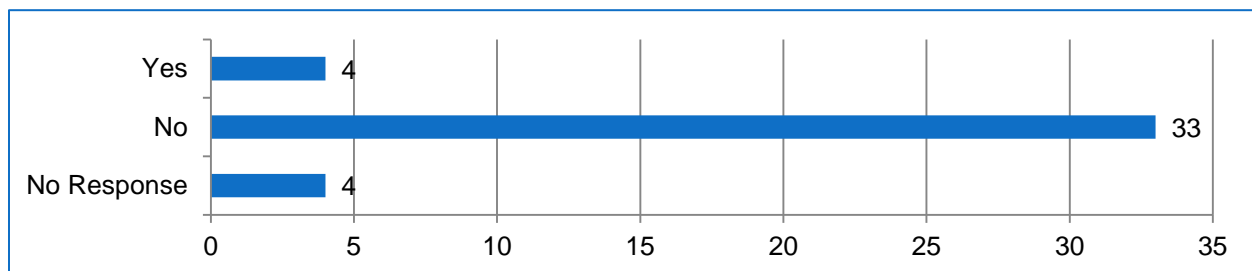
Residents and property owners of the Village of Clyde were mailed copies of the Village of Clyde Viability Review Stakeholder Input Form and asked to return completed forms to the Viability Review Team by April, 2013. A total of 225 forms were mailed out. Additional forms were made available at the village office for those people who did not receive a form in the mail. The forms could be submitted by mail, fax, and email and completed online.

In total, 40 submissions were received by the Village of Clyde Viability Review Team. The input provided on the completed stakeholder input forms is compiled in Section 1.

Question 1 - Are you a resident of the Village of Clyde?

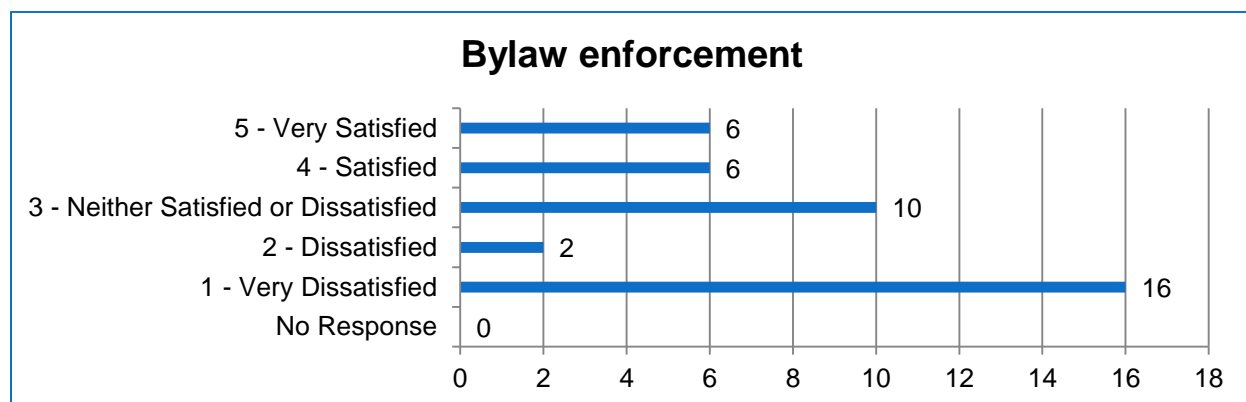


Question 2 - Do you operate a business in the Village of Clyde?



Question 3 - What is your level of satisfaction with the following in the Village of Clyde?

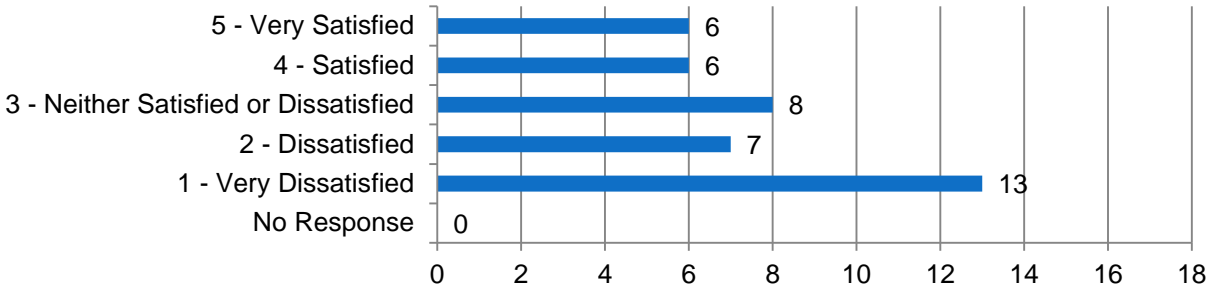
Stakeholders were asked to rate the 12 sections of Question 3 from 1 to 5 with 1 representing very dissatisfied and 5 representing very satisfied.



Written comments regarding bylaw enforcement:

- We have very good bylaws.
- Unsightly property bylaws need to be enforced (2).
- Dogs and cats run wild doing damage (3).
- It's sad when you fear walking in your own community because of dogs on the loose and dangerous dogs.
- We don't have a bylaw officer in Clyde (3)

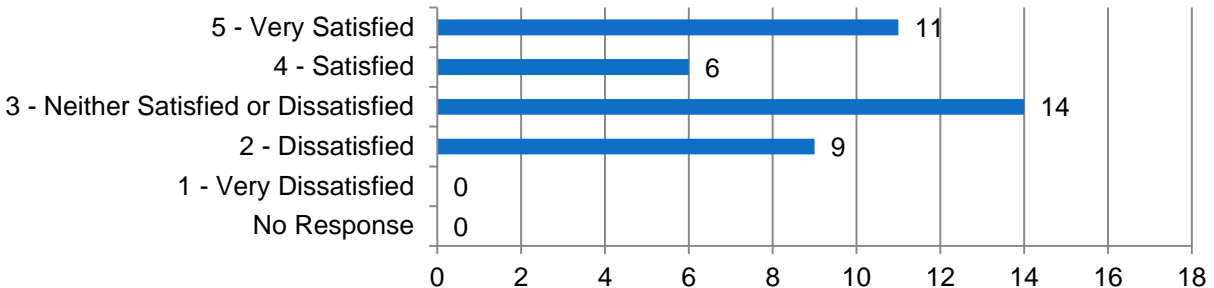
Council communication with residents



Written comments regarding council communication with residents:

- Over the years, some of our councillors have been rude, sarcastic, and unapproachable.
- Very uncooperative over war memorial and care of memorial.
- When I questioned an issue, I was left with no explanation. That's the way it is.

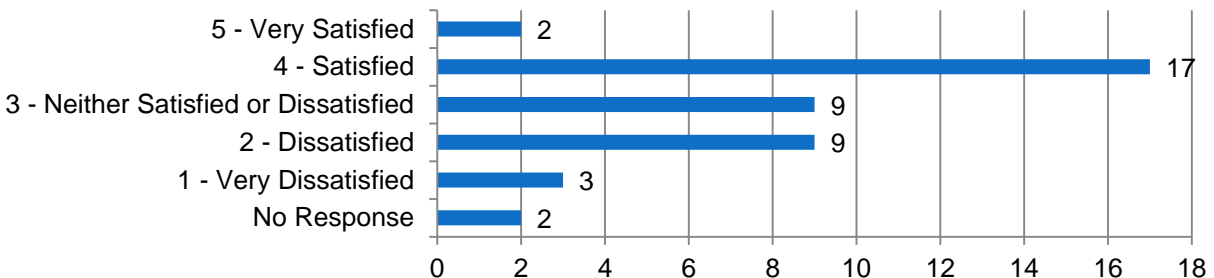
Culture and recreation programs and services



Written comments regarding culture and recreation programs and services:

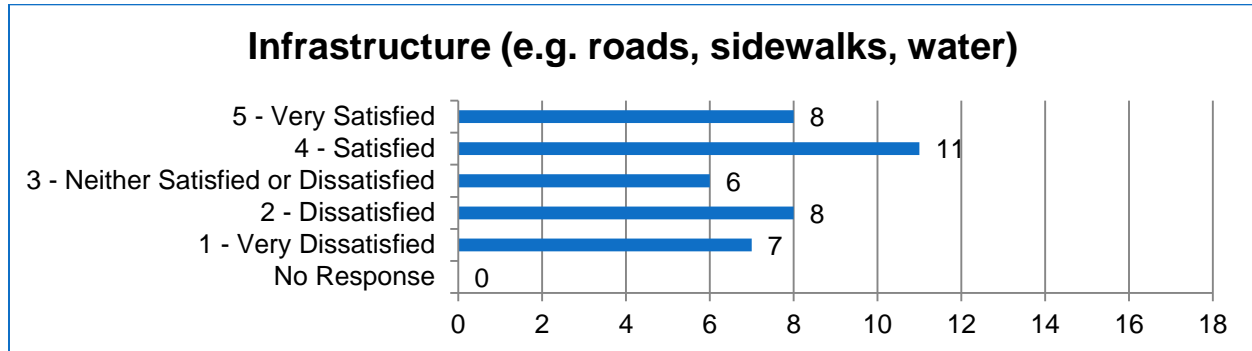
- It was great they put in exercise equipment, but a person can't use them in winter.
- It would be nice if there was something to do in this village.

Fire and emergency services



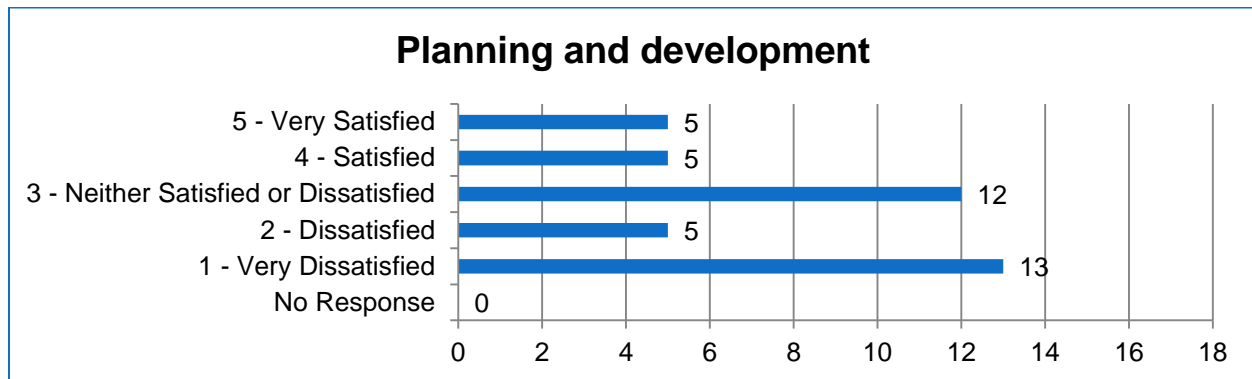
Written comments regarding fire and emergency services:

- No comments provided.



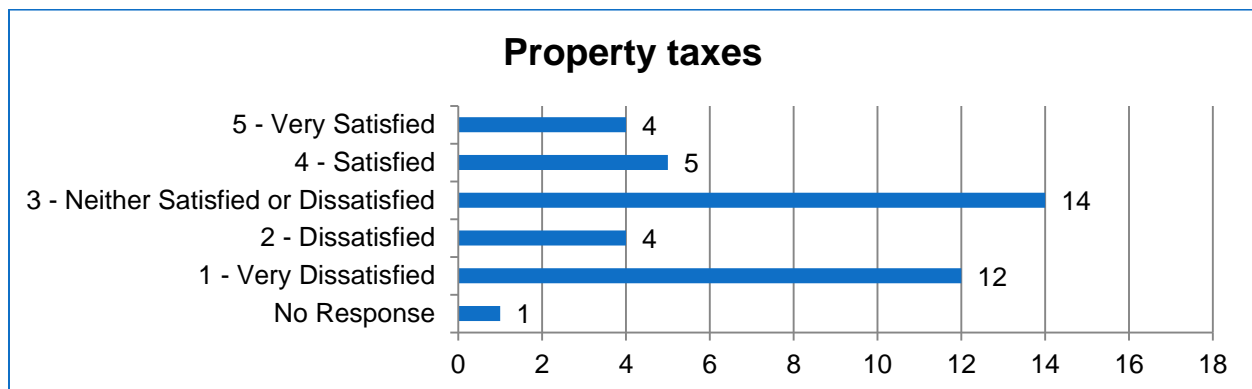
Written comments regarding infrastructure:

- Our infrastructure and equipment is deteriorating due to inexperience and negligence, costing taxpayers thousands of dollars.



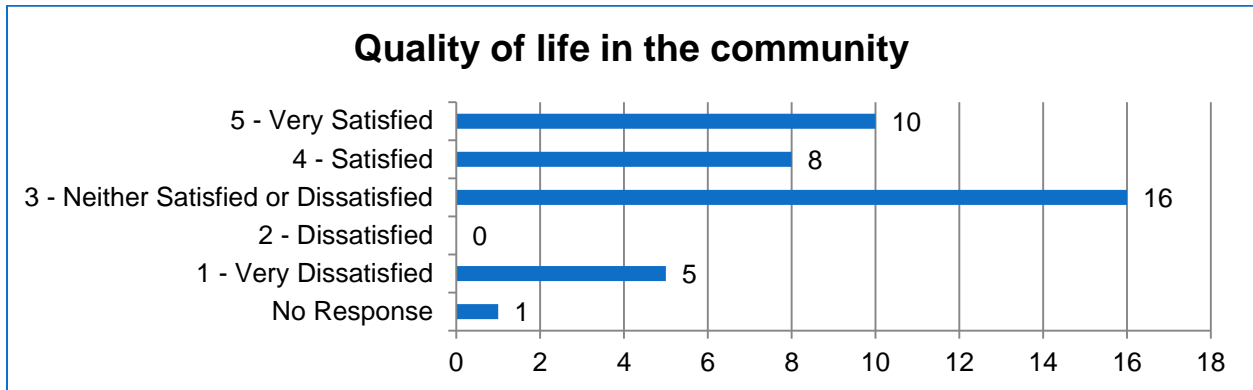
Written comments regarding planning and development:

- Some people get rezoning priorities/approvals and others are refused (3).
- Businesses are discouraged from opening and those that try are driven out (2).
- It seems council does not want the village to grow and new development is discouraged (2).



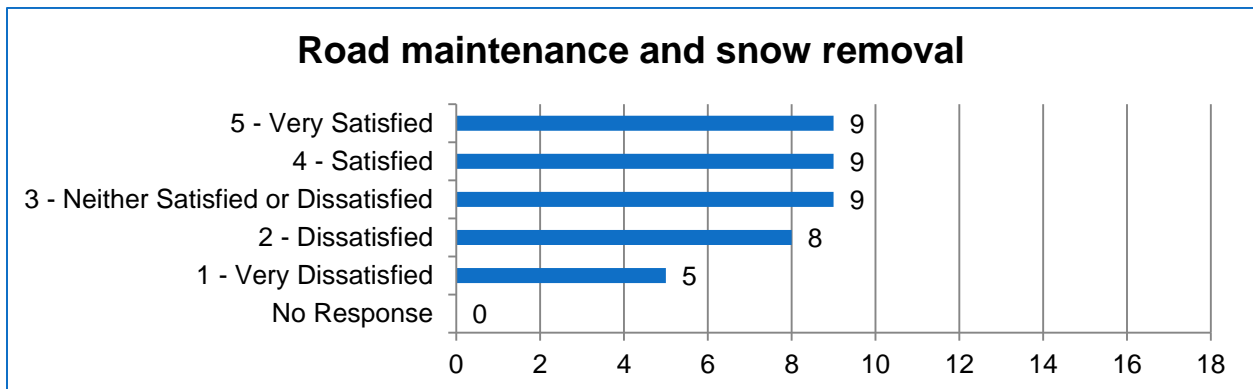
Written comments regarding property taxes

- The taxes are too high, almost like I was living in Edmonton.
- Taxes okay.
- I understand that the village needs to be financially viable but at what cost to the ratepayers. For example, we are paying roughly \$4,000 in taxes.
- The village double taxed the trailers in the trailer court for numerous years.



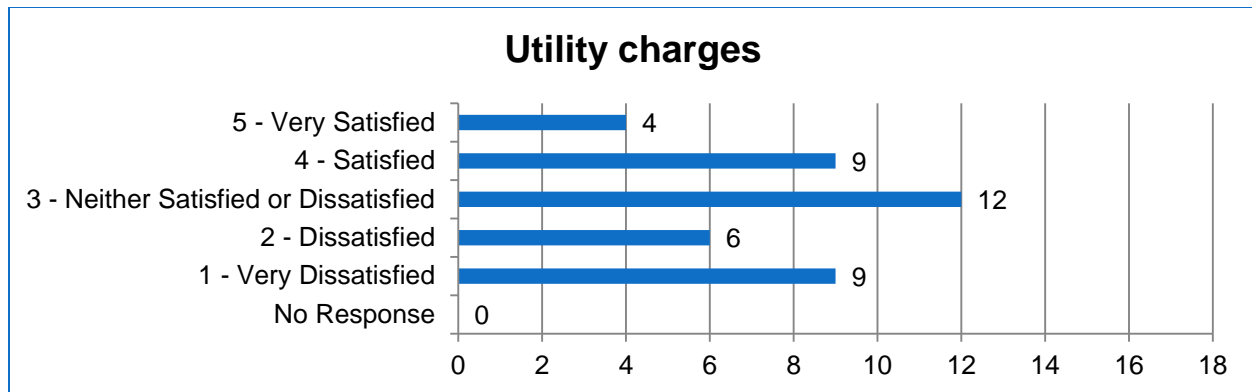
Written comments regarding quality of life in the community:

- No comments provided.



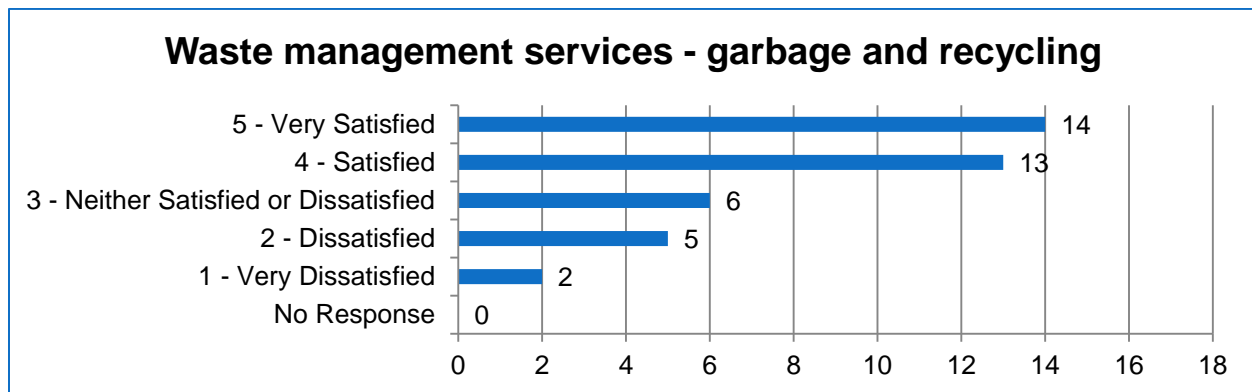
Written comments regarding road maintenance:

- Snow removal for the 2012-2013 winter was just about perfect compared to other years.
- None of the snow is removed; high-ups get it fast.
- The trailer court is cleared last and there is poor access at times (2).
- Water oily film road maintenance and none for long periods.
- Roads need to be cleaned of snow for proper drainage.



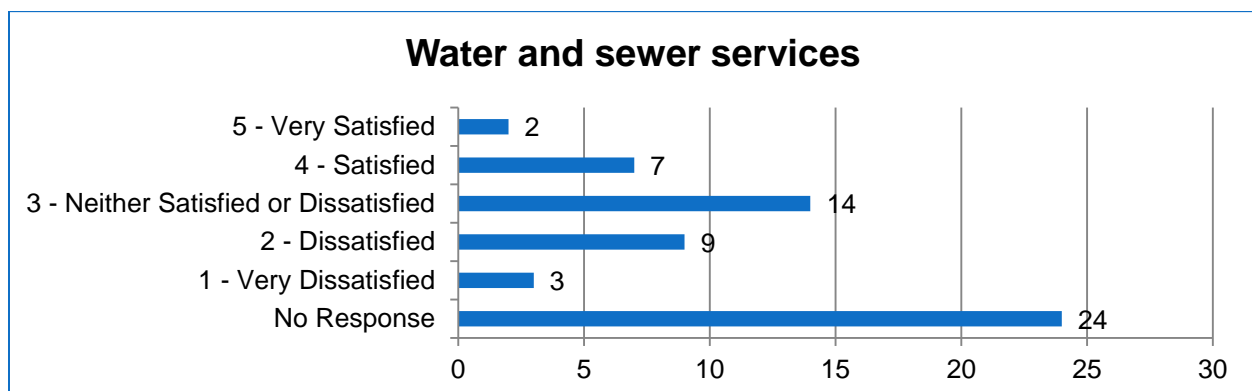
Written comments regarding utility charges:

- No comments provided.



Written comments regarding waste management services:

- Appreciation to the village for continuing annual Clyde Clean-up. It is an excellent way of keeping our village presentable and a better place to live and be proud of.
- Our garbage trucker is incredibly kind and efficient.

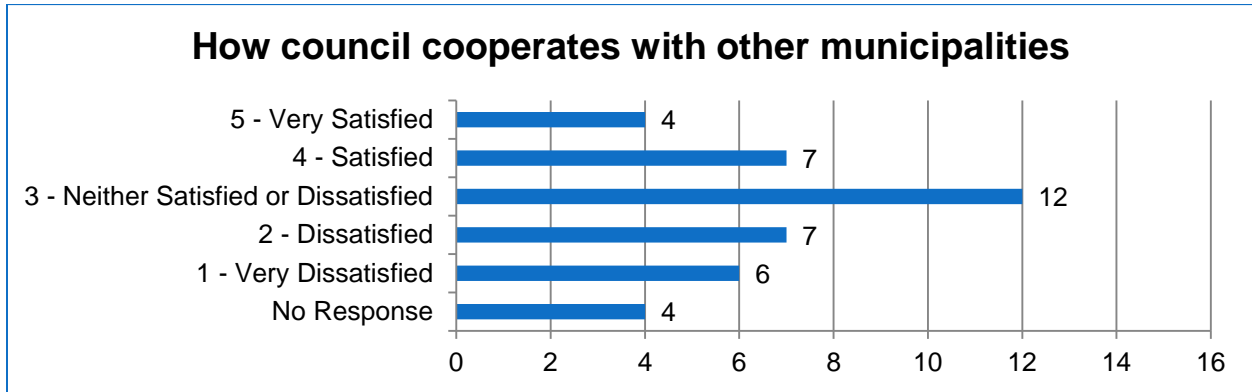


Written comments regarding water and sewer services:

- There are water meter issues

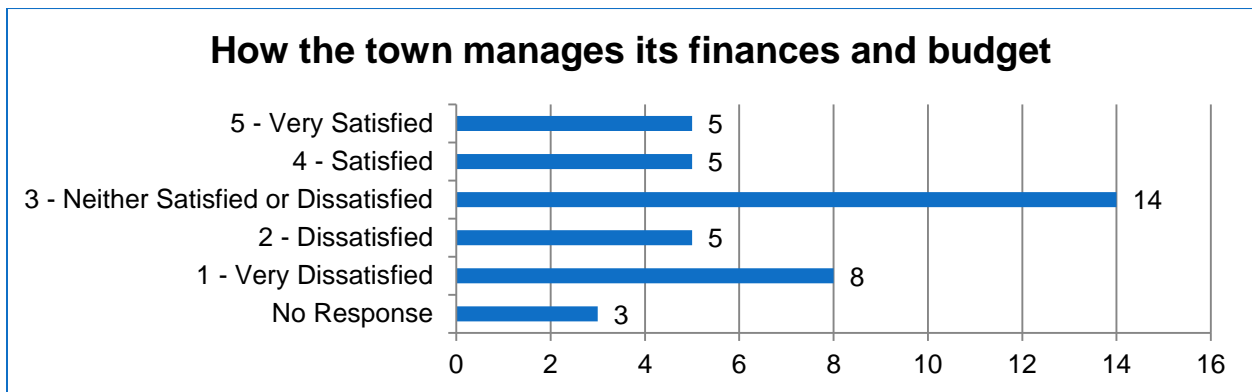
Question 4 - What is your level of satisfaction with the following in the Village of Clyde?

Stakeholders were asked to rate the five sections of Question 4 from 1 to 5 with 1 representing very dissatisfied and 5 representing very satisfied.



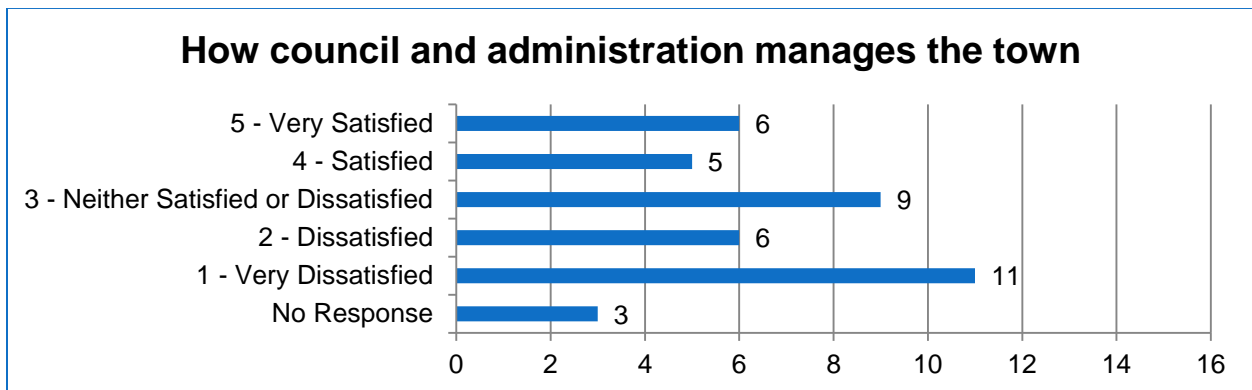
Written comments regarding how council cooperates with other municipalities:

- No comments provided.



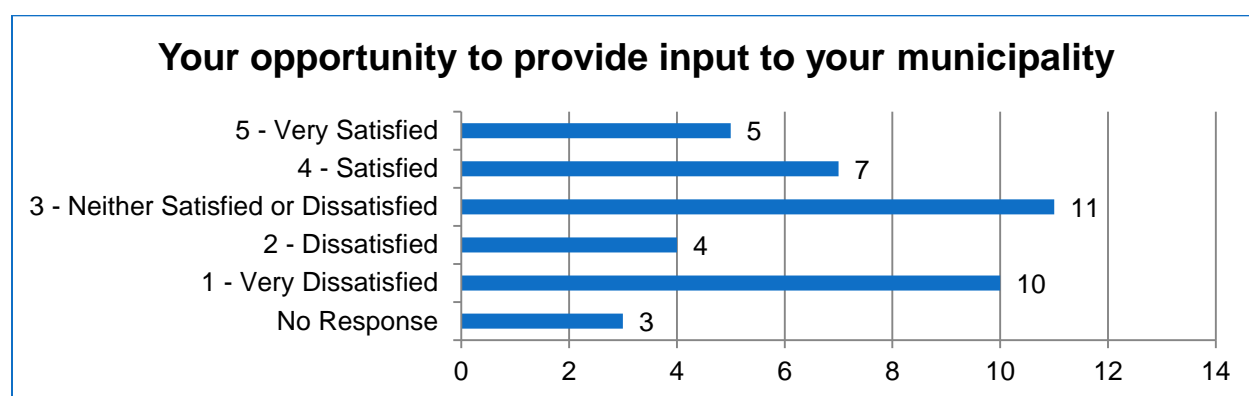
Written comments regarding how village manages its finances and budget:

- No comments provided.



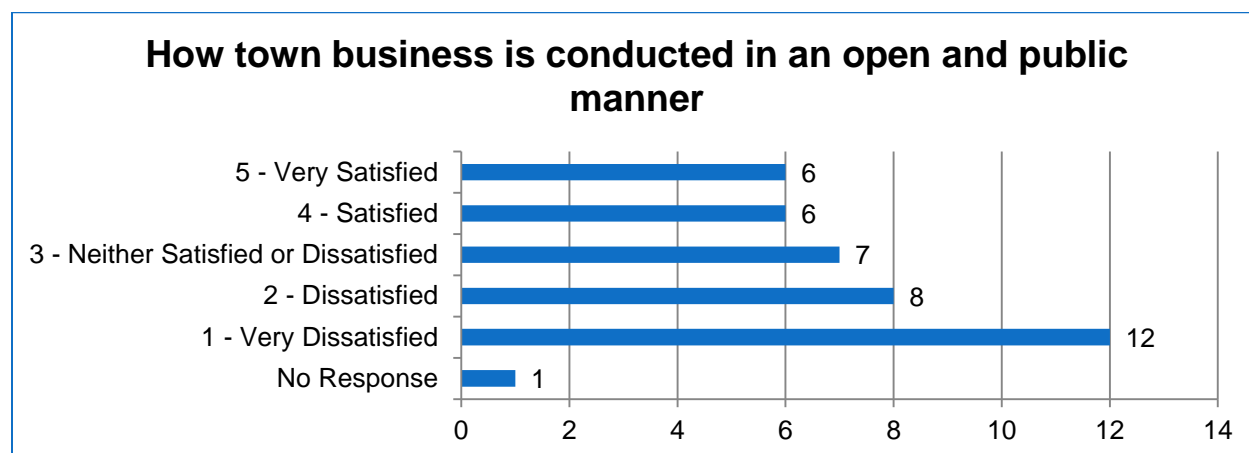
Written comments regarding how council and administration manages the village:

- The village is doing an excellent job and has really improved on all aspects.
- We can't keep a steady staff at the Village of Clyde office for whatever reasons (4).
- Ideally it would be nice to have community members hired for the village positions. This would definitely be beneficial then tax payers' money would be used more effectively.
- I feel the reason for a village office and a council is to improve and take care of the village. Over the years there have been many issues that I have called the office about. Any issues I've had, I have taken care of myself. So, for me, having a village council office is a waste of time.
- The Clyde village office should be open on Fridays for residents to pay the utility bills.
- We are very satisfied with the Village of Clyde and the services they provide to the Clyde and District Drop-in Centre.
- Those who operate the Village of Clyde are extraordinary in all they do. They go that extra mile for people. My compliments and appreciation. Thanks for caring. Council and staff members need to learn to put principles before personalities.
- This village operates on personal opinions.



Written comments regarding residents' opportunity to provide input to the municipality:

- No comments provided.



Written comments regarding how village business is conducted in an open and public manner:

- I am struggling with the conduct of the council in the village and strongly believe inappropriate, unethical behaviour is going on here. At the last council meeting held on June 18, the procedures followed by council were not in keeping with the MGA.
- Our council does not act democratically. They all bow down to one certain councillor.
- I have attended a few meetings and I couldn't believe the arguing and yelling that goes on. They never seem to accomplish anything.

Question 5 - Do you wish to provide any additional comments about the Village of Clyde to the viability review team?

Of the 40 respondents 29 chose to provide written comments.

Comments have been listed under the respective question about the village operation or practice. Those comments not pertaining to one of the questions are listed below.

- We haven't lived in Clyde long enough to be able to give real sound input (2).

The Petition for a Viability Review

- The petitioner who came to our door in my opinion lacked any real facts about dissolving our village.
- The information was presented incorrectly (2).
- People were told property taxes would be about half the current amount.

The Viability Review and dissolution of the Village of Clyde:

- It is my opinion and desire that Clyde keeps its village status.
- Don't change the village to the County of Westlock. Going to the county would greatly reduce our services (2).
- I have been a resident for 50 years now, and I am very satisfied with what the village is doing
- I just want to say that I am very happy with Clyde and what happens.
- I am strongly opposed to going to the county and want Clyde to stay on its own as a village.
- Clyde is a very pleasant village. It has been so for 99 years and needs to remain on its own.
- Our family is satisfied with the village on the whole and would hate to see it dissolve.
- I am always concerned when various levels of government interfere with the democratic responsibility of citizens to have direct impact on their government. Eliminating the village council will reduce the democratic impact of village residents. I encourage the report to favour maintaining the village council.
- Taxes would not be reduced if we join the county (2).
- It would be a terrible mistake to turn the village over to the municipality.
- I feel that moving to county governance would only make sense rather than doubling up on services and equipment; probably lowering our taxes.
- This council needs to be dissolved.
- The residents of Clyde would be better off as part of the County of Westlock (2)
- We never had a chance to vote on this matter (2).

Part 2 – Written Input from Table Discussions at the Public Meeting and the Stakeholder Engagement Workbooks

The Village of Clyde Viability Review Team held a public meeting on October 23, 2014. Approximately 35 members of the Clyde community attended the event at which the Village of Clyde Viability Review Stakeholder Engagement Workbook was distributed. The workbook was available at the village office and posted on the ministry website. In total, 22 completed workbooks and five written submissions were received by the viability review team.

At the public meeting, the participants were grouped around eight tables and guided through the five questions in the Village of Clyde Viability Review Stakeholder Engagement Workbook.

A summary of the responses to the five questions along with comments provided in other written submissions is provided in this section. Comments are listed under the respective question.

Question 1 – What is important about Clyde being a village?

Matters identified by the table groups as most important were:

- autonomy and civic pride
- councillors know better what we need than another municipality does because they live here
- history of pride, proudness, and history (2)
- more control over dollars being spent
- no better off under the county
- option of deciding what bylaws are the best fit for Clyde
- our own council has the ability to make decision based on what's best for Clyde residents
- own identity, more dollars from provincial and federal governments
- services would be better provided - control of services
- taxes costly, must be dealt with
- the village has its own identity
- to be successful, all council should be required to take municipal training

A summary of responses provided in the stakeholder engagement workbooks and other written submissions:

- greater representation of residents and decision-making that is catered to local residents (16)
- autonomy, civic pride and sense of identity (18)
- maintaining and/or improving service levels (8)
- small town feel (10)
- Council and Administration are more approachable (3)
- Council requires municipal training (2)
- the County has made many unfavourable changes and is currently not operating effectively
- grant availability and management (3)
- it isn't important whether Clyde remains a village or goes back to the County
- safety
- that the mayor and Council care about growth and improvement
- sustainability (3)
- child friendly

- build good recreation facilities
- manage own finances and tax dollars (9)
- long history (7)
- to work well with other municipalities to access partnership grants by working together
- taxes are too high

Question 2 - What should the top priorities for the Village of Clyde be?

Matters identified by the table groups as most important were:

- attract business as well as residential owners - growth
- balance of taxation
- collection of outstanding taxes owed and look at options of ways for people to make payment
- find more revenue
- full cost recovery utility rates
- growth
- infrastructure - for roads and maintenance (2)
- like to see where my money is going
- lobby the provincial government to maintain or increase funding
- long-term infrastructure plan (2)
- reduce expenditures before increasing taxes
- services like snow removal and lawn cutting

A summary of responses provided in the stakeholder engagement workbooks and other written submissions:

- improve and maintain infrastructure (11)
- develop an infrastructure plan including budgeting for infrastructure (3)
- maintain qualified Council and staff (3)
- have a Council that is receptive to residents (2)
- keep the mill rate at a reasonable amount (3)
- full cost recovery for utilities (5)
- full recovery of taxes (10)
- full cost recovery on services
- incentives for residents to improve their properties
- business attraction (3)
- long-term planning
- need for growth (8)
- maintain service levels without increasing costs (taxes, utility rates, user fees, etc.)
- sustainability (2)
- maintain the look and image of the village (2)
- do not increase taxes
- lower taxes (2)
- good snow removal (3)
- attract new residents
- develop a solid budget/financial plan (7)
- fair/equitable cost for providing ratepayers with necessary services to function as a hamlet or village

- lobby provincial and federal levels of government, as well as other sources for available grants
- keep independence and volunteers
- basic knowledge of day to day operations of village
- reduce expenses
- pride in property
- balance of taxes and service charges
- lobby government to stop downloading costs and increase funding
- grass cutting
- an invested interest in the village would be an asset to working in the office

Question 3 – Are the property taxes and utility rates in Clyde reasonable for the current services levels?

Matters identified by the table groups as most important were:

- for the services we are getting the property taxes are what they are
- Generally seem high but comparisons are hard not enough information
- No but is it any better elsewhere?
- Services - need better infrastructure these are high taxes for a gravel road
- utility bills need to go up
- water power and maintenance okay but there's nothing else. Believe so when you consider what available - sewer disposal, compost, fire department, snow removal, appearance of the village
- we couldn't make an educated decision about whether or not taxes should go up until we know why 22% of our taxes are not being paid - people can't afford , don't have to etc.??

A summary of responses provided in the stakeholder engagement workbooks and other written submissions:

- full cost recovery for services and utilities should be achieved (2)
- small property taxes and utility rates should be increased (2)
- property tax rates and utility rates are reasonable for services provided by the village (10)
- property taxes are too high (8)
- achieving cost recovery for utilities would make utility rates too high (3)
- water utility rates should be reviewed
- investigate non-payment of taxes
- utility rates are lower than they should be
- some property taxes are too high and this is an assessment problem, penalizing newer and larger homes that receive the same level of services as older homes
- generally the property taxes and utility rates are reasonable but it depends on the type of resident one lives in
- the current system of calculating property taxes based on the value of property is not ideal
- property taxes and utility rates seem somewhat high but do not have comparable information to make an accurate assessment
- property tax rates and utility rates have increased but service levels have decreased
- need an open and independent audit system for disputes over utility bills, tax assessments and payments
- utility rates reasonable for service level, but property taxes are not reasonable for services received

- the mill rate was increased (2014) with no added services to the community - increase was part of the cost of administration (2)
- taxes need to be assessed so that there is a balance
- should expect to pay a little more because of smaller tax base
- people who don't pay taxes should not live or have a lot in Clyde, but the mill rate may have to be adjusted to have a resource for future projects
- property taxes are reasonable but utility rates need to be increased
- residents need to be willing to pay for services they want

Question 4 – What other viability issues should the Clyde Viability Review Team be analyzing?

Matters identified by the table groups as most important were:

- form a friends of something
- how to attract business/commercial to help in tax department
- long-term planning
- look into other groups to see if could work together local organizations - Ag society/Lions group
- not just about money alone, what we get for our taxes is important
- otherwise not sure
- the culture on council of bullying

A summary of responses provided in the stakeholder engagement workbooks and other written submissions:

- find a way to attract businesses to Clyde
- potential partnerships with other municipalities (2)
- Staff and Council retention (2)
- investigate future viability (2)
- possible amalgamation with neighbouring municipalities (2)
- how to grow the community/attraction of new residents (2)
- replacement of water lines
- culture of current Council
- lobby federal and provincial governments for more money
- Council's involvement in hiring and letting go of staff
- user pay issues (2)
- Council governance issues (2)
- village administration/CAO issues
- property tax rates
- if residents are receiving value for their tax dollars
- community identity and events (2)
- community engagement and communication
- long-term plan for all municipalities in the area
- water infrastructure (2)
- whether County of Westlock's Council will work collaboratively with the Village of Clyde or against it
- Council's need for training on their roles and responsibilities
- tax recovery

Question 5 – Do you consider the Village of Clyde to be viable?

Matters identified by the table groups as most important were:

- no, fiscally
- the big challenge - loss of provincial funding same for everyone - may affect the sustainability
- very strong community well-being - strong volunteer base
- village viable now but maybe not in the future, for how long, trending towards non-viability
- we need to promote growth and community encourage new residential development in Clyde
- yes, in some areas
- Clyde is viable but feel issues need to be helped in a more directed way like recouping taxes

A summary of responses provided in the stakeholder engagement workbooks and other written submissions:

- the Village of Clyde is viable (12)
- Clyde may not be any more viable if it joined the County
- Clyde is viable with the community volunteers
- how high do property tax and utility rates have to go in order for a municipality to be considered unviable?
- Clyde is viable for the time-being but not sure once infrastructure upgrades will need to be done
- there is a strong community base (2)
- without MSI funding, Clyde will not survive without raising property taxes again which are already out of control (2)
- Clyde is viable but there will be challenges to manage all future costs
- Clyde is unviable as there is too much Council turnover
- Clyde is unviable due to the unpaid taxes in arrears and upcoming repair of water lines, etc. (2)
- Clyde is trending towards non-viability
- Clyde would be unviable without the dedication of its current volunteers
- Clyde is unviable in its current state; it must grow and work together to improve, as well as get a new Council and Mayor in office

Participants at the meeting were asked an additional question.

Question at the Public Meeting - Was the Initial Findings Report understandable and did it help?

Matters identified by the table groups as most important were:

- good report, very easy to understand
- yes, good information, helpful, and good to have comparisons to other villages
- yes, helped people think
- yes, loved the report, gave people an understanding of where we are at
- yes, the report was well done

A summary of responses provided in the stakeholder engagement workbooks and other written submissions:

- the report was understandable and provided residents with a financial picture of Clyde (2)
- the report was good
- the report was very good
- the report was understandable (3)
- the report was very easy to understand (2)
- the report was very informative
- the focus of the report was mostly on the financial, and not very much on people

Section 2 - Viability Determination

The Viability Determination section of this report provides the viability review team's determination of whether the Village of Clyde is clearly viable or trending towards non-viability and the reasons for the decision.

The viability review process requires the viability review team to undertake a complete examination of the finances, administration, governance, and services of the review municipality. Stakeholder input is part of the information gathering and research component of the review.

Based on the information compiled in the Village of Clyde Initial Findings Report and analyzed by the Village of Clyde Viability Review Team plus the input provided by Clyde residents, the viability review team has determined that the Village of Clyde is trending towards non-viability.

The Viability Review Team came to this determination based on the following factors:

1. The village does not know the overall condition of the village's infrastructure, what infrastructure upgrades or replacements are required, or how future infrastructure projects could be funded.
2. The village's finances are projected to show deficits due to the pending cuts to provincial government grants for the village's operations. In 2015, the village proposes to subsidize operating expenses from reserves to maintain current tax rates. This practice could result in the eventual depletion of the village's financial reserves.
3. The village has experienced difficulties in attracting and retaining municipal staff and councillors.
4. The village's utility system does not consistently operate in full cost recovery.
5. The village has experienced a lack of development and growth.
6. The village has a high amount of outstanding property taxes.
7. The feedback heard at the public meeting regarding the unpaid property taxes and the concerns that the village may not be viable five to ten years in the future.

Section 3 - Next Steps

The determination that the Village of Clyde is trending towards non-viability does not mean that the village will necessarily dissolve. The next task for the Village of Clyde Viability Review Team is to develop a Viability Plan for the village. The plan will include actions that could be taken by the council to ensure the ongoing viability of the village and the impacts on the Village of Clyde and Westlock County should dissolution occur.

Residents will be informed of project updates and further stakeholder engagement will take place once the Viability Plan is completed.

For further information, please contact:

Linda Reynolds
Municipal Sustainability Advisor
Alberta Municipal Affairs

Email: viabilityreview@gov.ab.ca

Toll-free in Alberta by dialing: **310-0000** and entering **780-427-2225**