Information Technology

ABOUT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

For many years, information technology (IT) has been playing an important role in the operations of organizational, strategic and management systems in Alberta municipalities. It is often difficult for generalists – which most members of Council are – to keep up with the rapid changes taking place in IT and, therefore, to know what questions to ask to ensure that IT issues are being properly addressed.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

1. Does the municipality have a strategic information systems plan in place that is monitored and updated as required? Does this plan form the basis for annual plans, annual and long-term budgets and for prioritizing of information technology projects?
2. Have appropriate procedures been established to ensure that your municipality is aware of technology trends, periodically assessing them and taking them into consideration when determining how it can better position itself?
3. Have key performance indicators and drivers been established for the IT activity? Are they monitored from time to time and are they benchmarked against municipal standards?
4. If you have a third party service provider, have relevant indicators been defined and monitored to manage its performance?
5. Has management identified the required technology expertise and how is top talent attracted either to staff or in third party service providers?
6. If you have IT employees, does management have appropriate procedures in place to address IT employee turnover, training and project assignment?

RISK ISSUES

7. What procedures are in place to ensure the integrity of your municipality's internal control and management information systems?
8. Have your municipality's information technology security policies, standards and priorities been effectively communicated to employees and contractors?
9. Does management have a plan to periodically conduct risk assessments covering your municipality's use of information technology, including internal systems and processes,

outsourced services and the use of third party communications and other services? If it does, are the results of the assessments acted on where appropriate or required?

10. Does your municipality understand the impact of an interruption in service and are there plans in place to deal with potential interruptions? Has a business continuity plan been adopted, is it tested regularly and are the results used to improve the plan?

11. What arrangements does your municipality have for the regular review and audit of its systems to ensure risks are sufficiently mitigated and controls are in place to support the major processes of your municipality? Does the review include any e-business activities in which your municipality may be involved?

PERSONAL INFORMATION PRIVACY

12. Has your municipality assigned someone the responsibility for privacy policy, and compliance with privacy legislation?

13. Has your municipality identified the various legislative and regulatory requirements the new environment regarding personal information privacy and developed policy and procedures for monitoring compliance with them?

IT PROJECT PLANNING

14. Does your municipality have the capacity for change, the resources and the skills to succeed in the project?

15. Has the project planning process adequately identified the risks, tasks, time estimates, deliverables, milestones and resources/skills needed to complete the project?

16. Is there sufficient information available to enable your Council to make an informed investment decision?

17. Does the project plan include an effective process to handle changes in planned deliverables, manage "scope creep", and resolve project conflicts?

18. Does the project plan include contingency or fallback strategies to mitigate the risk of decreased service levels in case of a failed implementation of the project?

19. Will there be a final comparison of actual to budget costs incurred and benefits achieved against the original business case for the project?

20. Is there a process in place for your municipality to capture significant lessons learned during the life of the project in order to further mitigate risks for future projects?