

Councillor Accountability Framework Workshop

Discussion Guide

Preamble

From 2017 to 2025, the *MGA* and the Code of Conduct for Elected Officials Regulation required all councils to have a councillor code of conduct bylaw. These provisions and the regulation were repealed as part of the *Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025*, due to concerns about misuse.

The *Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026*, amended the *Municipal Government Act (MGA)* to create a new councillor accountability framework. The *MGA* now establishes rules, processes, and procedures for submitting a complaint, conducting preliminary reviews, investigations, and appeals under the framework. A regulation is required to implement the councillor accountability framework to address topics such as contraventions, sanctions, fees, timelines, investigator and appeal commissioner qualifications, and other operational considerations.

Purpose

This workshop is designed to discuss implementation of the councillor accountability framework. Facilitators will walk participants through the process as it is outlined in the *MGA* and provide an opportunity for discussion on areas requiring clarification, additional information, and operational considerations. Feedback will be summarized and used to inform the policy options for a new councillor accountability regulation for consideration by the Minister.

Scope

The questions in this document are designed to guide the conversation. Other questions will arise as the discussion progresses and will be welcomed.

In Scope

The workshop will focus on the following topics:

- Contraventions - pecuniary interests, use of municipal assets and services, confidentiality of information, egregious and threatening behaviour, and improper use of influence;
- Sanctions - permitted sanctions for a contravention of the accountability framework;
- Fees - fees for complaints and costs of appeals;
- Timelines - timelines for processes of the accountability framework;
- Investigators and Commissioners - the qualification, conduct and term of an investigator and appeals commissioner, investigator powers; and
- Operational considerations - processes for complaints, investigations, preliminary reviews, decision to apply sanctions, appeals, contents of a pecuniary interest report; the publication of information and custody and retention of records.

Out of Scope

The discussion will not focus on concerns unrelated to the implementation of the councillor accountability framework or any other processes or requirements that are set out in the *MGA*.

Discussion Questions

Discussion questions are ordered by complaint stage and theme.

Background information is in blue.

Opening Roundtable

Roundtable introductions

1. Please share your name, role, and municipality.
2. Briefly, from your perspective, what is the most important outcome of a councillor accountability framework?

Stage 1: Complaint Process

Please refer to the process map on page 7.

Contraventions

- 1.1. The following categories are in scope for a councillor accountability complaint (in addition to egregious and threatening behaviour, and pecuniary interest which will be discussed separately):
- Misuse of municipal assets
 - Misuse of confidential information
 - Improper use of influence

What details or definitions should be considered for these categories in the regulation?

- 1.2. How should egregious or threatening behaviour be defined for the regulation? For reference, please consider the table below.

Egregious or Threatening Behaviour	Non-Egregious or Threatening Behaviour
• Physical Force: Hitting, shoving, kicking, or throwing objects at an individual. • Weaponry: Brandishing or attacking someone with a weapon or improvised tool. • Intimidation: Aggressive gestures, such as shaking a fist or using a vehicle to frighten someone. • Criminal Harassment: Stalking or repeated, unwanted contact that causes a person to fear for their safety. • Criminal Acts: Theft, fraud, embezzlement, or deliberate destruction of property. • Sexual Misconduct: Violence, coercion, or sexualized communications. • Verbal/Written Threats: Expressive conduct that incites violence or promotes hatred against protected groups. Statements expressing intent to cause death, bodily harm, or property damage.	• Private Conversations: Engaging in open dialogue or debates with friends, family, or colleagues outside of a professional setting or service delivery. • Dissenting Professional Views: Sharing opinions on professional standards or government policies that differ from the stance of municipality. • Constructive Criticism: Providing feedback or criticism of leadership that does not cross into criminal harassment or incitement of hatred. • Unpopular or Offensive Speech: Expressing ideas that others may find offensive or controversial, provided they do not involve threats of violence or illegal discrimination. • Workplace Disagreements: Professional conflicts or "heated" debates regarding tasks or strategy that do not involve physical intimidation or verbal threats of harm. • Personal Opinions: Expressing viewpoints on social, political, or cultural issues on personal social media accounts or in public forums.

Fees

- 1.3.** Should there be a fee for submitting councillor accountability complaints during the preliminary review process?
- a) If 'yes', what should the fee be?
 - b) If 'no', why not?

For context, there is a \$500 fee for recall petitions, and for filing a court order if a councillor is disqualified.

Timelines

- 1.4.** During the preliminary review process, should there be timelines for:
- a) Selecting an investigator?
 - b) Submitting the preliminary review report?

Operational Considerations

- 1.5.** Should there be publication requirements for a preliminary report?
- a) If 'yes', what should the requirements be?
 - b) If 'no', why not?
- 1.6.** Who should be responsible for the custody and retention of records related to preliminary reviews?
- 1.7.** How long should preliminary review records be retained?

Additional Thoughts on Preliminary Reviews

- 1.8.** Is there anything else you would like to add about the preliminary review process?

Stage 1: Complaint Process – Pecuniary Interest

Please refer to the process map on page 8.

Operational Considerations

- 1.9.** Do you have any operational concerns about the process described in the map?
- a) If 'yes', what concerns do you have?
 - b) If 'yes', do you have any suggestions for how to solve or mitigate these concerns?
- 1.9.1.** Should there be a timeline for a councillor who is subject to a councillor accountability complaint, investigation, or finding to resign voluntarily?

Additional Thoughts on Pecuniary Interest

- 1.10.** Is there anything else you would like to add about the pecuniary interest complaint process?

Stage 2: Investigation and Sanctions

Please refer to the process map on page 9.

Sanctions

This list is sanctions that were permitted under the former councillor codes of conduct:

- issuing a letter of reprimand addressed to the councillor;
- requesting the councillor to issue a letter of apology;
- publishing a letter of reprimand or request for apology and the councillor's response;
- requiring the councillor to attend training;
- suspending or removing the appointment of a councillor as the chief elected official under section 150(2) of the Act;
- suspending or removing the appointment of a councillor as the deputy chief elected official or acting chief elected official under section 152 of the Act;
- suspending or removing the chief elected official's presiding duties under section 154 of the Act;
- suspending or removing some or all council committees and bodies to which council has the right to appoint members; and
- reducing or suspending remuneration as defined in section 275.1 of the Act corresponding.

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1.4. What are appropriate sanctions for violating the councillor accountability framework?

Timelines

- 1.5. What should the timeline be for:
- a) Initiating full investigation?
 - b) Submitting investigation report?
 - c) Passing resolution to accept the investigator's report?
 - d) Making a decision to apply/not apply sanctions?

Investigators and Commissioners

When conducting an investigation, an investigator has the power to do any or all of the following:

- make inquiries orally or in writing of any person the investigator believes has or may have information relevant to the subject-matter of the investigation;
- demand the production for examination of records and documents, including electronic records and documents, that are or may be relevant to the subject matter of the investigation;
- make copies of any of the things referred to in clause (b);
- access municipal land and facilities for the purposes of clauses (a) to (c);
- do anything permitted in the accountability framework.

1.6. Are the powers of the investigator in the Act sufficient? Why or why not?

- a) If 'insufficient', what do you feel is missing?

1.7. What qualification should investigators/appeal commissioners have?

- a) Is there a specific occupation or profession that should be eligible to be a commissioner based on education, role requirements, or professional experience?

- 1.8. What criteria that should be considered when reviewing applications for these roles?
- 1.9. Should there be a term limit for these roles?
- a) If 'yes', how long should the term be?

Operational Considerations

- 1.10. Should there be publication requirements for an investigation report?
- a) If 'yes', what should the requirements be?
 - b) If 'no', why not?
- 1.11. Who should be responsible for the custody and retention of records related to investigation reports?
- 1.12. How long should investigation report records be retained?

Additional Thoughts on Investigations and Sanctions

- 1.13. Is there anything else you would like to add about the investigation and sanction process?

Stage 3: Appeal Process

Please refer to the process map on page 10.

Fees

- 3.1. Should there be a fee for a councillor to file an appeal?
- a) If 'yes', what should the fee be?

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Timelines

- 3.2. What should the timeline be for:
- a) Submitting a complaint regarding the outcome of the investigation and sanctioning process?
 - b) Filing an appeal?
 - c) Appointing an appeal commissioner?
 - d) Conducting appeal hearing?
 - e) Submitting recommendations to the Minister on appeal?
 - f) Minister decisions/order on recommendations?
 - g) Publishing required documents?

Operational Considerations

- 3.3. Who should be responsible for the custody and retention of records related to appeals?
- 3.4. How long should records related to appeals be retained?

Additional Thoughts on Appeals

- 3.5. Is there anything else you would like to add about appeals process?

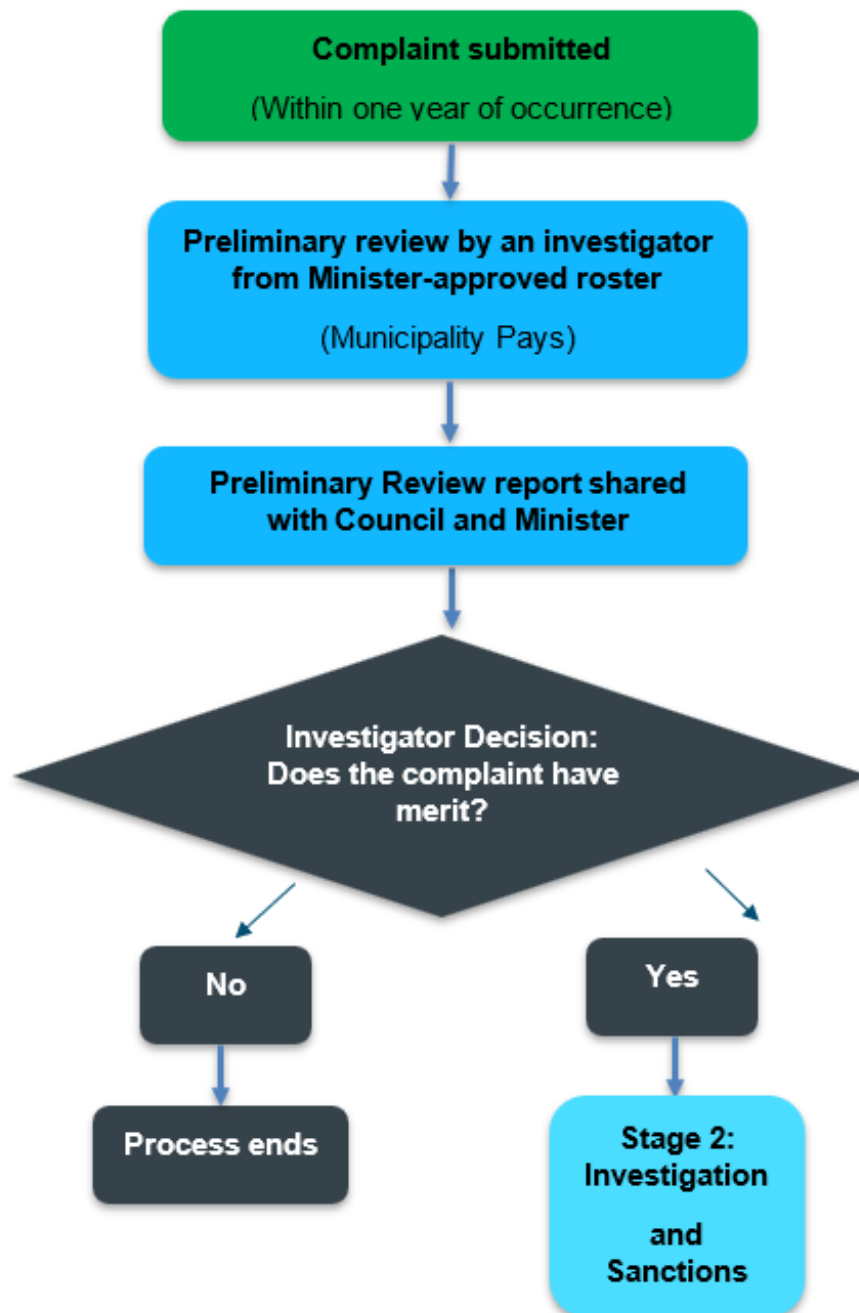
Final Thoughts

- 4.1. Is there anything else you would like to add to today's discussion?

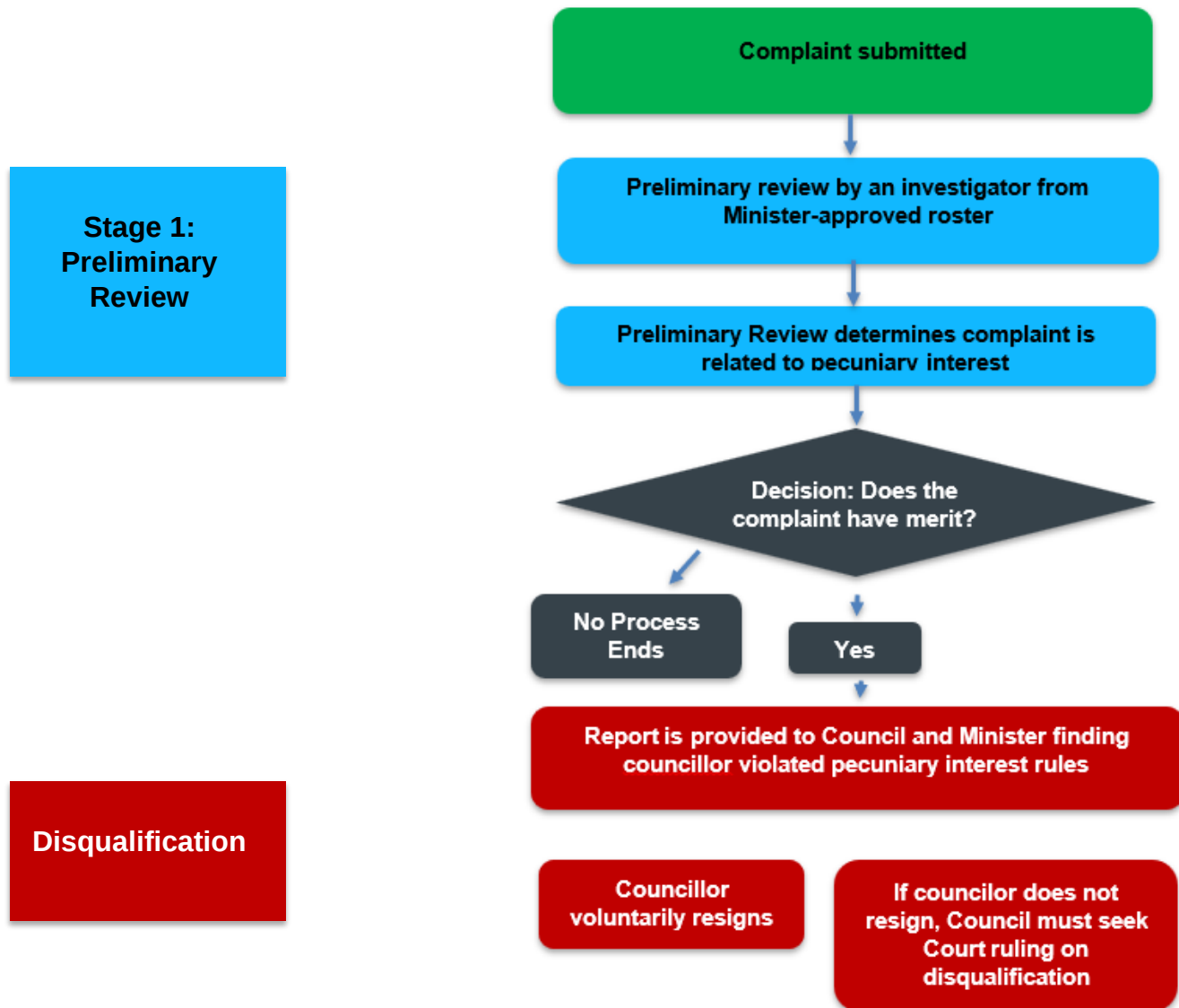
Thank you for your participation in today's workshop. Please send any written feedback to ma.engagement@gov.ab.ca by August 7, 2026.

Appendix 1: Process Flow Charts

Stage 1: Complaint Process



Stage 1 – Complaint Process, Pecuniary Interest



Stage 2: Investigation and Sanctions



*Note that the Minister may also initiate an investigation and in this case the province would pay.

Stage 3 – Appeal Process

