



ALBERTA
MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

Office of the Minister

JUL 22 2014

AR74345

Mr. Darrell Clarkson
38 Starling Drive
Sherwood Park AB T8A 0A7

Dear Mr. Clarkson,

Thank you for your letter regarding a site development proposal on agricultural land in Strathcona County. I appreciate your concern over protection of prime farmland.

As you have noted in your letter, the *Municipal Government Act (MGA)* delegates local planning and development decision-making responsibility to municipalities. Part 17 lays out municipal land planning processes, including stipulations for holding public hearings on planning bylaws and amendments, and Section 632 has provisions for including policy regarding agricultural operations in municipal development plans.

The Government of Alberta recognizes the importance of conserving agricultural land through long-established broad provincial land-use policies to support the maintenance and diversification of Alberta's agricultural industry. These policies are legislated through Section 622 of the *MGA* and can be reviewed online at:
www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/documents/ms/landusepoliciesmga.pdf.

The Capital Region Board (CRB) was established to regulate growth planning in Edmonton and the surrounding region. This is achieved through the implementation of the CRB's land plan review work, and decision-making is conducted through the Regional Evaluation Framework (REF), as referred to in Ministerial Order L:270/10. The REF allows for statutory plans (which exclude land-use bylaws) and their amendments to be evaluated against the Capital Region Growth Plan's objectives and recognized planning principles. The CRB and member municipalities use principles, such as agricultural land protection, to guide future growth and development in the region. The growth plan and its addenda are available through the CRB website at www.capitalregionboard.ab.ca. The *MGA* Section 639.1 speaks to applying the same principle to land-use bylaws, and states that in preparing a land-use bylaw, a municipality must consider the protection of agricultural operations – and decisions must comply with the regional plan.

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The Land-use Framework sets a new approach to managing the province's land and natural resources, including agriculture. Strathcona County is located within the North Saskatchewan planning region. Phase I Public Consultations are complete for the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan, but the process provides further opportunities for Albertans to contribute until July 31, 2014. Additional information can be found at the website: www.landuse.alberta.ca/Newsroom/Pages/PublicConsultations.aspx.

The ministry is undertaking a comprehensive review of the *MGA*. By the date of your correspondence, public consultations across Alberta had wrapped up and offered a chance for Albertans to be involved; at this time, public input opportunities have finalized. For your information, the ministry has made available a webpage where "What We Heard" reporting will be provided in the coming months; please visit: www.mgareview.alberta.ca/what-we-heard/. All input received during the recent public consultation will be given careful consideration as part of the update to the *MGA*.

Given the existing planning provisions described above, Municipal Affairs does not intervene in local matters for which the legislation and regulation delegates responsibility and lays out process. However, I encourage you to continue to work with the municipality to utilize existing planning tools and engage in the process to ensure your concerns are heard and alternatives brought to light for local consideration.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,



Greg Weadick
Minister of Municipal Affairs

cc: Honourable Dave Quest
MLA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park

Jacquie Fenske
MLA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville

Cathy Oleson
MLA, Sherwood Park