

Organized Hamlet of Pasqua Lake Application for Municipal Incorporation Survey Results

September 8, 2022

Executive Summary

The Ministry of Government Relations (ministry) organized a survey of voters within the Rural Municipality of North Qu'Appelle No. 187 (RM), including the Organized Hamlet of Pasqua Lake (OH), from June 27, 2022 to July 31, 2022. This survey was conducted with the assistance of the RM administration and the OH board. The survey results will be used to assist the ministry in the decision making process on the OH's application to become a resort village. The survey received a satisfactory number of responses. Survey results show there is strong support for the OH to become a resort village.

Background

The ministry is responsible for Saskatchewan's municipal government system. The ministry receives and reviews requests for changes of status, such as when an organized hamlet wishes to become a resort village. The ministry's review is to ensure the proposed request results in municipalities that are sustainable, viable and in the best interest of the citizens and the municipal government system.

Incorporation Criteria

The Municipalities Act (Act) and *The Municipalities Regulations* (Regulations) set out the **minimum** criteria to incorporate an organized hamlet as a resort village. An organized hamlet with a census population of less than 300 must:

- Have been an organized hamlet for at least three years;
- Have a population consisting of at least 100 permanent residents and at least 200 seasonal residents;
- Have 150 separate dwelling units or business premises;
- Have a taxable assessment of at least \$35 million;
- Be predominantly resort in nature; and
- Meet all other criteria and application requirements for incorporation set out in the Act or Regulations.

Independent municipal governments in Saskatchewan must undertake certain legislated responsibilities. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring municipal revenues (property taxes, service fees and grant funding) are sufficient to cover all expenditures of the local government. While not a conclusive list, some of these legislative requirements are:

- Hiring and retaining a qualified administrator to manage the municipality;
- Providing and furnishing a publicly accessible municipal office;
- Employing additional staff/contract workers such as maintenance personnel;
- Obtaining memberships for municipal associations;
- Hiring professional services such as planning consultants, building officials, engineers, auditor and legal;
- Establishing council remuneration and related expenses;
- Establishing appointed boards and committees' remuneration and related expenses;
- Providing for protective services, such as policing, fire protection, and bylaw enforcement;
- Being responsible for capital and maintenance costs of municipal roads, including snow clearing (e.g. Pasqua Lake Road);
- Paying regional library levies;
- Obtaining property and liability insurance; and
- Being responsible for public utility expenses.

If these obligations are not met, there would be an adverse effect on the municipality and its citizens. It is also important, although not legislated, that all municipalities in the province work together with their neighbouring municipalities and communities through regional cooperation.

Request from the Organized Hamlet of Pasqua Lake

On December 7, 2021, the ministry received an application from the OH to:

- Separate from the RM.
- Request its organized hamlet status be changed by incorporating as a resort village.

The ministry is currently reviewing this application. This review includes whether the OH meets the minimum legislative criteria to incorporate, as well as determining if the OH is prepared to meet the legislative responsibilities as a municipal government.

If, after this review, the minister approves the OH's application, the OH would no longer be a part of the RM. OH voters would be asked to elect a mayor and council members to make decisions on their behalf.

To assist the minister in his decision about this application, the ministry was asked, with assistance from the RM and the OH, to conduct a survey of the RM and OH voters to determine if the voters are aware of the implications, present and future, of being a viable, legislatively responsible, and compliant independent municipality.

Results

There were 238 responses to the survey (160 completed responses and 78 partial responses). From the responses, 156 (78.4%) respondents indicated they owned property or resided within the OH boundaries. 43 (21.6%) respondents indicated they lived outside the boundaries of the OH but are voters of the RM.

The chart below shows the responses to Question 2 of the survey, which asked respondents to indicate if they agreed, disagreed or are uncertain with the reasons outlined in the OH's application as to why it should be incorporated as a resort village. Overall, the vast majority of people agreed with the reasons for the incorporation.

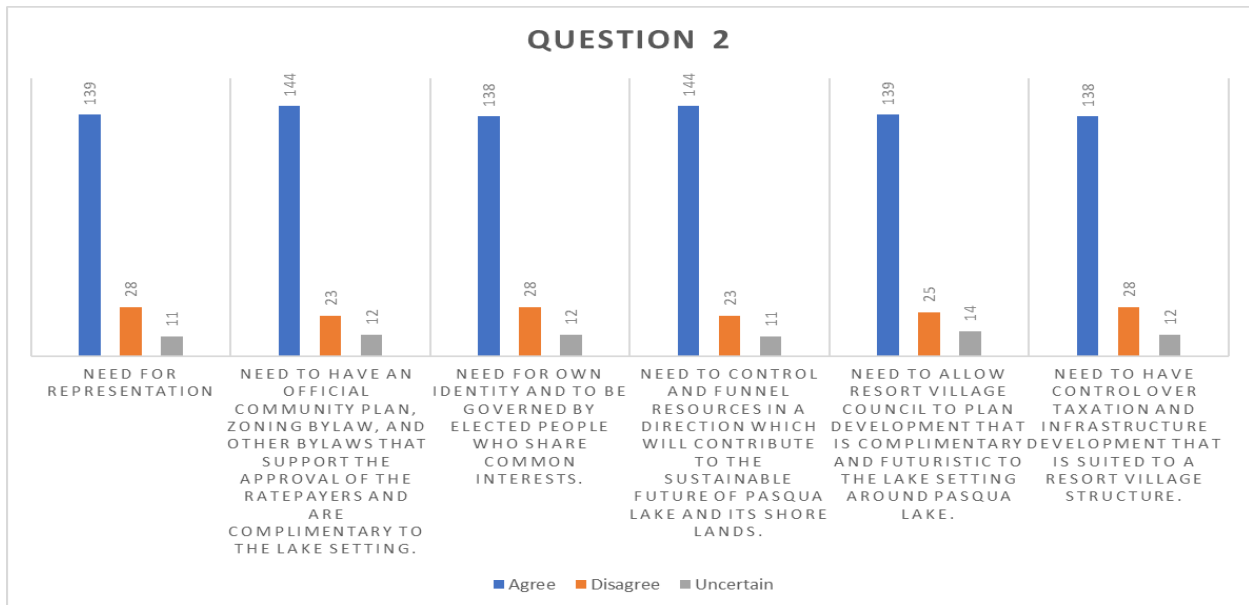


Figure 1

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide comments on the reasons for their answers. Significantly more comments were in support than opposed. Those who were in favour reiterated the need for self-governance, control over revenues, and services more directed to resort communities. One comment in particular summarized the overall comments of those in favour of incorporation: “I would prefer us to be incorporated as a resort village to enhance democracy and control finances for the residents of Pasqua Lake. I am frustrated by past financial decisions taken by the RM that benefits the RM to the direct detriment to the residents of Pasqua Lake.” Similarly, the comments opposing the application raised concerns over the proposed finances, governance, and services. One respondent stated, “the current structure under the RM187 already provides Pasqua Lake Residents with representation at the local level, provides unbiased oversight of resources, provides good services (including garbage & road maintenance) and fair taxation and maintains Pasqua Lake as a lake setting.”

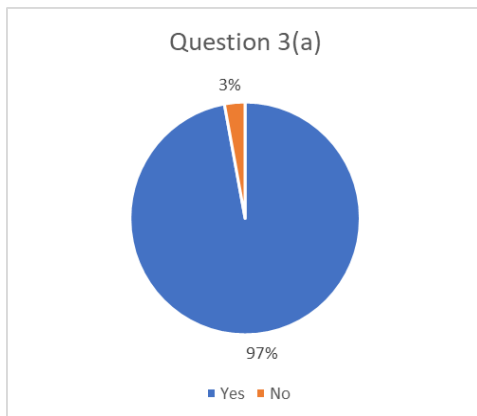


Figure 2

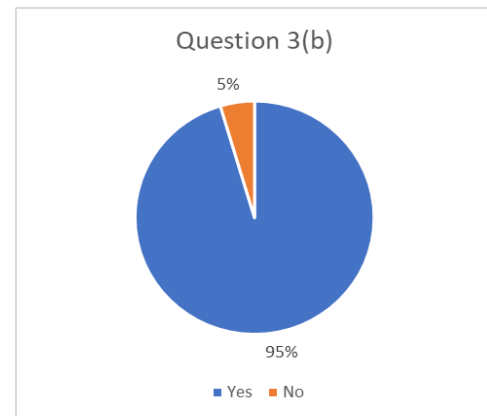


Figure 3

Question 3 was a two-part question outlining a list of the legislative and financial responsibilities of municipalities. In the first part of the question, respondents were asked if the information provided a better understanding of the legislative and financial obligations of the OH if it were to become a resort village. 168 (97%) indicated the list provided a better understanding of the legislative obligations and 5 (3%) said it did not (Figure 2). Similarly, the second part of the question showed that 165 (95%) said

the list provided a better understanding of the financial obligations the OH would have if it were to become a resort village, and 8 (5%) answered it did not (Figure 3).

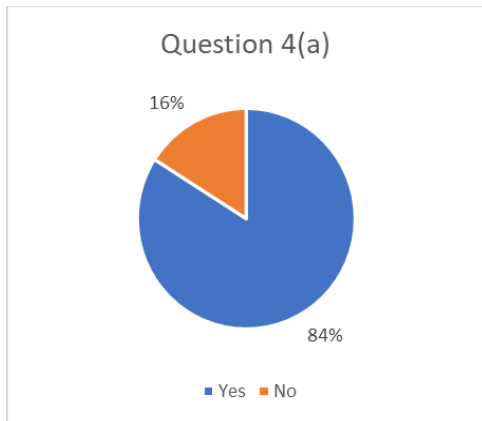


Figure 4

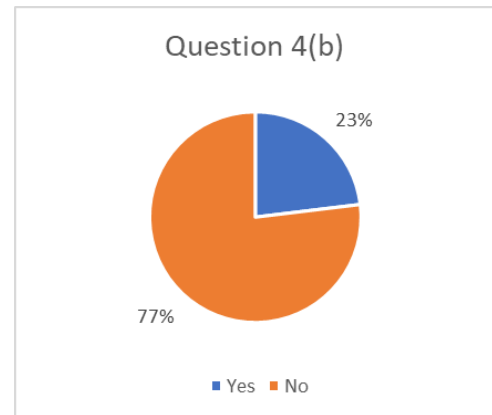


Figure 5

Question 4 was also a two-part question with the ability to provide comments at the end. The question pertained to attracting and retaining council members for a resort village. The survey listed the eligibility requirements to be on council for a resort village. Figure 4 shows 142 (84%) believe the OH would be able to attract and retain council members if the application is successful, whereas 27 (16%) said they did not. The second part of the question asked, "understanding council members are not required to reside in the resort village in which they serve, does this change your opinion on whether or not Pasqua Lake becomes a resort village?" As indicated in Figure 5, 130 (77%) said this does not change their opinion and 39 (23%) said it does.

Respondents provided a few comments, the majority of which feel council members should have to reside in the resort village.

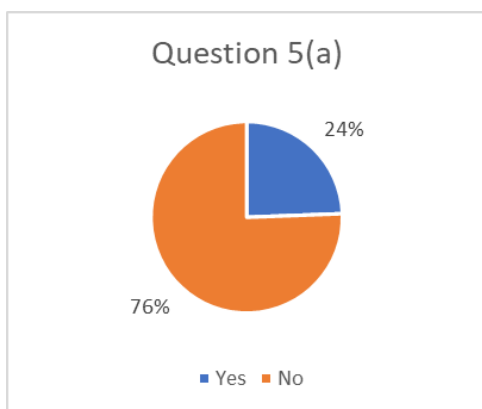


Figure 6

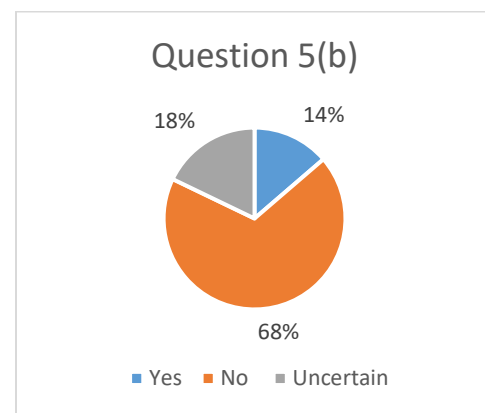


Figure 7

Question 5 asked two questions regarding the future sustainability of the OH if it were to become a resort village (Figure 6) and the future sustainability of the RM if the OH were to leave (Figure 7). 127 (76%) respondents did not have concerns about the future sustainability of the OH if it becomes a resort village and 115 (68%) did not have concerns regarding the RM. Alternatively, 41 (24%) had concerns regarding the OH and 23 (14%) had concerns about the RM's sustainability if the OH were to become their own municipality. 30 (18%) were uncertain about the RM's future sustainability if the OH were to leave.

Several comments were made regarding a statement the reeve of the RM made last year at the public meeting. The reeve indicated the RM would be financially fine if the OH were to leave the RM. The other comments made pertained to suspected tax increases for the new resort village and for the RM. Several comments were made concerning the cost sharing of Pasqua Lake Road.

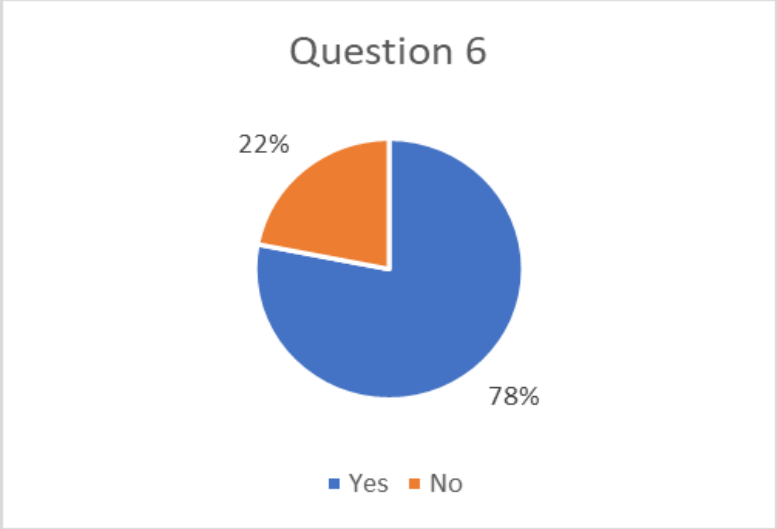


Figure 8

Question 6 was the final question. It was a yes or no response, asking if the respondents support the OH becoming a resort village. As Figure 8 indicates, 164 answered with 128 (78%) saying yes and 36 (22%) saying no.

Although there were comments supporting and opposing, the majority of comments were in support of the application. The theme of the comments were similar to all other comments: the need for local representation; the need for financial control; and the statement that urban needs are different than rural.

Conclusion

The questions prepared for the survey strived to provide the respondents with an understanding of what the responsibilities are for municipalities. Although the questions were not exhaustive, it is clear from the survey results the majority of respondents feel the OH should become a resort village.