

# THE MUNICIPAL ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT AND MUNICIPAL BOARD AMENDMENT ACT

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Overview of Legislation

#### **1. What does this bill do?**

- This bill will amend The Municipal Assessment Act to enable property owners outside Winnipeg to access their assessment notices online.
- The bill will also enable municipalities to make a portion of their assessment rolls available to the public in electronic format.
- Amendments will enable the City of Winnipeg to implement similar initiatives.
- This bill will amend The Municipal Board Act to support and clarify the enhanced authority of the Municipal Board to manage planning appeals effectively and efficiently.

### The Municipal Assessment Act

#### **2. Why are we making changes to The Municipal Assessment Act?**

- Currently, all property owners receive their notice of assessment via mail, with no option to receive it electronically. The electronic assessment notice will replace paper notices if Manitobans opt in to receive an electronic notice. Property owners will be able to access and save an electronic version of their notice in a place convenient for them.
- Additionally, legislation currently requires the assessment roll be available in municipal offices during business hours, implying that citizens are required to visit municipal offices to view assessment rolls. Online access to assessment rolls will enable citizens to view assessment rolls (with certain identifying information removed) at a time and place convenient for them.
- In addition to providing more convenience to property owners, the approach will save printing costs.
- Enabling property owners to access their assessment notices and assessment rolls electronically will bring Manitoba in line with current customer service standards already adopted by other jurisdictions and private companies.

### Electronic Assessment Notice Delivery

#### **3. How will the electronic assessment notice be delivered?**

- Mailed assessment notices will contain property owners' unique client number allowing them to sign up voluntarily on an online portal by creating a free account to view, download or save an electronic version of their assessment notice.
- Property owners opting in for accessing electronic assessment notices will no longer receive paper notices in future years. When their assessment notice is ready to view, property owners will be notified via a system-generated email sent to the email address they used to open up the online account.

#### **4. Will an electronic assessment notice be the same as a paper assessment notice?**

- Yes, an electronic assessment notice will be an electronic copy of the same paper-based assessment notice containing the same information.

**5. Does this increase costs for property owners?**

- There will be no additional cost to property owners for signing up to receive electronic assessment notices.

**6. How will these amendments reduce costs or improve government efficiency?**

- In addition to providing more convenience to ratepayers, this approach will save printing costs if Manitobans opt in to receive electronic assessment notices, while reducing government's carbon footprint due to a reduction in printed mailings.

**7. What happens if a property owner does not receive an electronic assessment notice after signing up for electronic notices?**

- The assessment notice would still be posted on the property owner's account on the web portal and available at any time after the system-generated email is sent to the property owner's email registered with the account. Property owners would be required to keep their email up to date to receive email alerts from the portal.
- In cases when property owners do not receive email reminders to view the assessment notices online, they can contact their local assessment office to update their account information with a new email address or to receive a copy of their assessment notice.
- Assessment information is also included in annual tax statements which are provided to property owners by the municipality.

**8. Will these changes apply to the City of Winnipeg?**

- The City of Winnipeg prints and mails out assessment notices to all property owners within the city limits. This proposed legislation will also enable the City of Winnipeg to send assessment notices electronically, if they choose to do so.

**Electronic Assessment Rolls**

**9. Why is Manitoba enabling municipalities to post assessment rolls online?**

- Enabling municipalities to provide access to assessment rolls online will eliminate the requirement of residents to visit municipal offices to view assessment rolls. With the availability of assessment rolls online, property owners can access the information at a time and place convenient for them.

**10. Will the municipalities have to pass a by-law for posting assessment rolls online?**

- Yes. Passing a by-law ensures transparency and public awareness that municipalities are posting this information online.

**11. Will electronic assessment rolls include the same information as appears on assessment rolls available for inspection by the public at municipal offices?**

- No, only a portion of the municipality's assessment rolls will be made available to the public in electronic form. Identifying information of property owners such as the owner name, mailing address, and title number of the property will be protected to mitigate any privacy risks associated with posting bulk data online.

## **The Municipal Board Act**

### **12. Why are we making changes to The Municipal Board Act?**

- We have been listening to stakeholders. The input we received from the AMM, the public, and other stakeholders such as professional planners and the development industry has helped shape this legislation.
- The proposed amendments will support the successful implementation of planning appeals under The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act, proclaimed October 29, 2021.

### **13. Will the proposed legislation change the way the Municipal Board considers planning appeals?**

- Yes, it gives clear authority to The Municipal Board to work with parties to use effective and mutually beneficial alternatives to more costly and time consuming public hearings.

### **14. Will this new approach add time to the process?**

- The proposed legislation gives parties a maximum of 60 days to reach a mutual agreement without moving to a hearing. This extended timeline will allow the Municipal Board to allocate sufficient time for parties to meaningfully engage in consensus building.

### **15. Does the bill address grounds for appeal?**

- The proposed legislation creates a statutory requirement for an appellant to state the grounds for appeal in the initial filing with the Board. Requiring the appellant to give stated grounds will improve transparency and accountability while helping narrow and limit the scope and extent of future appeals brought to the Board.
- These provisions complement the requirement that planning authorities give written reasons for their decisions under The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act.

### **16. How does the bill deal with appeals that are without merit?**

- The proposed amendments give The Municipal Board authority to dismiss a matter by adjudicative order without a hearing if the appeal was not filed within the applicable time limit, if fees are not paid, or if in the opinion of the board, the subject matter is frivolous, vexatious, an abuse of process, commenced in bad faith, or where the appeal deals with matters that are outside the Board's jurisdiction.
- The Municipal Board must give parties written reasons for dismissal of an appeal and in turn, appellants will be given opportunity to be heard by the Board as to the dismissal.

### **17. When will the amendments to The Municipal Assessment Act and The Municipal Board Act come into force?**

- The proposed amendments to The Municipal Assessment Act will come into force at Royal Assent.

- The proposed amendments to The Municipal Board Act will come into force upon proclamation in September 2022. This will provide the Municipal Board with time to prepare for implementation.