

Advisory Spect's

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ASSET set for fall release

The time is drawing near when every municipality will be required to use the ASSET (Assessment Shared Services Environment) application to submit its annual return to Alberta Municipal Affairs.

The ASSET application will soon be ready for its first release. Municipalities will be given access to ASSET through the milenet web site, the department's portal to web-based applications. The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties and 10 municipalities are currently reviewing the user agreements and they are expected to be available this fall.

Only those stakeholders who have a legislated need for this application will have access to it. User agreements will be put in place to ensure that data remains confidential.

During the first few months, users will be able to try the application. This phase will provide an opportunity for municipalities to become familiar with the application and ensure that their system meets the ASSET requirements. During this phase, users can input cross-reference table data and monitor progress on this year's annual assessment audit.

Later this year, and early next year (when municipal assessment system providers have developed the new file formats for loading), municipalities will be able to do trial loads of this year's data to ensure that everything is working.

April 1, 2003 is an important date. This is the due date of the first actual load and the start of the first annual audit done through ASSET.

In 2004, the deadline for reporting information will be January 31 instead of April 1. This will enable the province to audit the assessments before using the information to calculate the equalized assessment.

In 2003, assessors will be responsible for providing:

- An annual return of assessments. This will replace the hard copy return that municipalities have previously provided for equalization purposes (Assessment & Valuation For Tax Year 20XX form).
- Periodic submissions of indicators of value (sales and assessment) information using ASSET instead of the previous audit forms.
- Revised submissions. These submissions will keep the information in ASSET in sync with

the municipal roll information that has changed because of revisions under the Municipal Government Act sections 305, 477 or 577.

- Supplementary assessment submissions. These submissions will capture supplementary assessment roll information that was not collected before.

Chief Administrative Officers (CAO's) should make sure their municipalities are prepared for ASSET by:

- Confirming that the assessor has been keeping abreast of the ASSET changes and requirements.
- Requiring and verifying that the assessment department/contractor has current computer hardware and software for preparing assessments.
- Verifying that the assessor's Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) software is being updated and tested as per the ASSET requirements. The ASSET Steering Committee has made funding available to the CAMA providers for these changes.
- Ensuring that the interface between the municipality's assessment/tax roll system and CAMA system is updated to exchange information

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MGB rules in Alliance Pipeline appeal

The Municipal Government Board (MGB) has concluded its deliberations on the Alliance Pipeline 2000 assessment/2001 tax year appeal and has ruled that the pipeline was assessable.

Alliance Pipeline Ltd. based its appeal on whether its pipeline was “under construction but not completed on or before October 31” and “not capable of being used for the transmission of gas.” Alliance contended that Alberta Municipal Affairs misinterpreted section 291(2)(a) of the Municipal Government Act and should not have prepared the assessment on the pipeline.

Numerous issues were addressed during the appeal proceedings. The board's decision may be viewed online at www.gov.ab.ca/ma/mgb under Board Order 106/02.

Municipalities are reminded that Alliance Pipeline may make an application to the Court of Queen's Bench for a review of this decision. The company has six months from the date of the board's decision to launch a review based on matters of law or jurisdiction.

If you have any questions, please contact Harold Williams, director of the Linear Property Assessment Unit at (780) 422-8409.

Message from the Executive Director

One thing I have observed frequently over the course of my career is the commitment shown by members of the assessment profession to the people and the governments we serve.

I see this dedication in several ways, including the willingness of professional assessors to get involved in initiatives to improve Alberta's property assessment system.

I have been impressed, for example, by the consensus-building success of the ASSET (Assessment Shared Services Environment) technical committee. This committee plays a key role in shaping ASSET, the new data-sharing system that will provide assessors with a comprehensive information base and online tools to help prepare property assessments.

It has been my pleasure to chair the ASSET technical committee since August 2001. In the past 12 months, this group met more than 35 times and made more than 30 proposals on how to move forward on ASSET and other recommendations of the municipal-provincial Equalized Assessment Panel. The committee is made up of 10 representatives of the municipal associations, the assessment profession, the cities of Calgary and Edmonton, and the provincial government. Members work together closely and share their expertise to find solutions to potential implementation issues.

The Assessment Services Branch looks to the Alberta Assessors' Association (AAA) as an important partner in the ASSET project and other initiatives. I meet regularly with AAA executive members to discuss matters of importance to the association and the branch and the municipalities and taxpayers who depend on our work.

AAA representatives have worked alongside provincial staff, municipal representatives and other stakeholders on a number of tasks to address issues or enhance practices in property assessment. Recent activities have included the development of the new Construction Cost Reporting Guide to replace the Special Property Assessment Guide. As well, several “best practices” guides have been developed under the direction of the Mass Appraisal and Market Value Committee, a joint committee formed by the branch and the association.

I take pride in my role in a profession that places high value on quality service. This commitment to quality is demonstrated every year as property assessors gather from across the province to attend appraisal workshops, discuss current issues, and network with colleagues at the AAA conventions and the Assessors' Symposium.

This attention to quality in the practice of property assessment has also been demonstrated by the positive response to the detailed assessment audits by this branch. During these audits, provincial assessment auditors take a comprehensive look at each municipality's assessment procedures and identify areas for improvement. The branch plans to do detailed audits in 100 municipalities this fiscal year as part of its five-year cycle under this program.

We have received a high level of cooperation throughout this process and full support of municipal councils

and administrators in taking follow-up action on the auditors' recommendations. I believe this reflects a widespread recognition of the significance of a well-functioning assessment system to the people and local governments of Alberta.

As a community of professionals, Alberta's assessors are aware of the need to plan for the future. There are challenges ahead for the profession, including the need for succession planning in view of the pending retirement of many experienced assessors.

There are also opportunities for young Albertans to move into this field of practice. It will be essential for the profession to define the training needs of future practitioners and follow up on the discussions held in forums such as the Calgary Symposium on Appraisal Education.

In my view, Alberta is fortunate to have a highly skilled body of assessors employed by, or working on contract with, our municipal and provincial governments.

Alberta's assessors are willing to address the challenges of the day and to help smooth the path for the appraisers of tomorrow.

With this in mind, I look forward to working with the profession on these important priorities.

*Steve White, Executive Director
Assessment Services Branch
Alberta Municipal Affairs*

Detailed audit program underway

The Assessment Services Branch (ASB) is conducting detailed audits in about 100 municipalities in the 2002/2003 fiscal year.

The branch set this goal in response to a recommendation by the Auditor General that Alberta Municipal Affairs complete detailed audits for all municipalities on a five-year cycle.

In planning for this major effort, the ASB selected municipalities to take advantage of geographic proximity and common assessment contractors as a strategy to increase efficiencies in doing the detailed audits.

As well, summer villages and rural municipalities are scheduled for detailed audits during the spring and summer months, and larger towns and cities for the fall and winter months. A copy of the schedule is included.

Detailed audits of the municipalities in Schedule A began in May 2002.

Detailed audits of municipalities listed in Schedule B will begin this fall.

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on assessments and the corresponding liability codes. The department has contacted all known assessment/tax roll system providers regarding liability code requirements.

- Ensuring that the liability code information for each property is recorded on the CAMA system or assessment/tax roll system. Liability code information was initially sent out as a bulletin from the Equalized Assessment Panel

Detailed Assessment Audits 2002/2003

Schedule A

Municipality Name & Type	Municipality Name & Type	Municipality Name & Type
1 Alberta Beach Village	23 Island Lake S.V.	45 Saddle Hills County
2 Argentia Beach S.V.	24 Island Lake South S.V.	46 Seba Beach S.V.
3 Banff Town	25 Itaska Beach S.V.	47 Silver Beach S.V.
4 Beiseker Village	26 Jarvis Bay S.V.	48 South Baptiste S.V.
5 Betula Beach S.V.	27 Kapasiwin S.V.	49 Stettler Town
6 Birch Cove S.V.	28 Lakeview S.V.	50 Sunbreaker Cove S.V.
7 Birchcliff S.V.	29 Leduc County	51 Sundance Beach S.V.
8 Bondiss S.V.	30 Ma-Me-O Beach S.V.	52 Sunset Beach S.V.
9 Bonnyville MD No. 87	31 Mewatha Beach S.V.	53 Sunset Point S.V.
10 Bonnyville Beach S.V.	32 McLennan Town	54 Sylvan Lake Town
11 Canmore Town	33 Milo Village	55 Tilley Village
12 Cardston County	34 Nakamun Park S.V.	56 Val Quentin S.V.
13 Castle Island S.V.	35 Newell County No. 4	57 Wabamum Village
14 Crystal Springs S.V.	36 Norglenwold S.V.	58 West Baptiste S.V.
15 Donnelly Village	37 Norris Beach S.V.	59 West Cove S.V.
16 Duchess Village	38 Parkland Beach S.V.	60 Wetaskiwin County No. 10
17 Falher Town	39 Parkland County	61 Whispering Hills S.V.
18 Golden Days S.V.	40 Pelican Narrows S.V.	62 White Gull S.V.
19 Grandview S.V.	41 Point Alison S.V.	63 White Sands S.V.
20 Gull Lake S.V.	42 Poplar Bay S.V.	64 Yellowstone S.V.
21 Half Moon Bay S.V.	43 Rochon Sands S.V.	
22 Horseshoe Bay S.V.	44 Rosemary Village	

Detailed Assessment Audits 2002/2003

Schedule B

Municipality Name & Type	Municipality Name & Type	Municipality Name & Type
1 Airdrie City	14 Grande Prairie City	27 Sandy Beach S.V.
2 Athabasca Town	15 Hill Spring Village	28 Silver Sands S.V.
3 Barrhead Town	16 I.D. No. 5 (Kananaskis)	29 South View S.V.
4 Bassano Town	17 I.D. No. 9 (Banff)	30 Spring Lake Village
5 Breton Village	18 Lacombe County No. 14	31 Sunrise Beach S.V.
6 Brooks Town	19 Magrath Town	32 Tofield Town
7 Burdett Village	20 Millet Town	33 Vauxhall Town
8 Burnstick Lake S.V.	21 Mountain View County	34 Vilna Village
9 Cold Lake City	22 New Sarepta Village	35 Waskatenau Village
10 Derwent Village	23 Onoway Village	36 Wetaskiwin City
11 Flagstaff County	24 Plamondon Village	37 Willingdon Village
12 Fort Saskatchewan City	25 Ross Haven S.V.	
13 Glenwood Village	26 Rycroft Village	

Technical Committee. (Liability Coding Requirements can be found under Equalized Assessment Panel Technical Committee at www3.gov.ab.ca/ma/as/). More information about liability codes will be distributed to stakeholders later this summer.

CAO's should be diligent in ensuring that ASSET requirements are addressed. The MGA requires that information be reported in a specific format and manner, and that assessments be audited. Starting in 2004 the validity of an assessment roll could be at risk if the requirements are not met.

Indications are that most assessors and the larger CAMA system providers have been taking the appropriate steps to prepare for ASSET. The department is confident that once any implementation issues are resolved, ASSET will make a significant contribution to the efficiency of the property tax system, as well as increase stakeholder confidence by improving the annual audit program and stakeholder access to assessment information.

If you have any questions on the ASSET project, contact ASSET System Manager, John Scott at 780-422-8415

New Director, Linear Property Assessment

The Assessment Services Branch is pleased to introduce Harold Williams, AMAA, as its new director of the Linear Property Assessment Unit.

Before joining the Assessment Services Branch, Harold worked in the Municipal Services Branch in municipal restructuring and put in place the Regional Partnership Initiative.

Harold was a city assessor, regional assessment manager and provincial assessment director from 1975 through 1997. He served as provincial director of assessment from 1993 to 1997, overseeing significant legislation changes, organizational restructuring and the introduction of market value assessment to Alberta. He has served as president of the Alberta Assessors' Association as well as chair of the Lakeland College Advisory Committee for Assessment and Appraisal.

Harold has also worked as a private consultant to business and local government.

Reporting reminders for farm land and seniors' self contained facilities

As a result of a recent review, the Assessment Services Branch suggests that municipalities need to consider the following information when reporting information on farm land and seniors' self contained facilities to Assessment Equalization.

Farm Land

Urban municipalities are reminded that they should not report farm buildings and structures in the "Total assessment of farm land assessed at agricultural rates" category.

Also, they should report farm residential sites and buildings in the residential category.

Seniors' Self-contained Facilities

Municipalities should report these properties in the partially exempt category as they are subject only to the municipal levy.

The assessment for seniors' self-contained facilities should not be reported as "total taxable" as they would then be subject to education and municipal levies for equalization purposes.

Under Ministerial Order H:016/96, the taxable assessment of self-contained senior citizens' housing accommodation that is owned by a management body established under the Alberta Housing Act, or is operated and administered by a management body under that act, is removed from the equalized assessment.

Ministerial Orders signed since the last issue of Advisory Aspects

MO#	APPLIES TO	REGARDING	DATE SIGNED
L: 171/01	All Municipalities	2001 Minister's Guidelines	December 10, 2001
L: 174/01	MD of Northern Lights	Assessment Review Board Decision Extension to January 25, 2002	November 27, 2001
L: 176/01	Woodlands County	Assessment Review Board Decision Extension to March 31, 2002	December 21, 2001
L: 177/01	MD of Rocky View	Assessment Roll Extension to April 12, 2002	December 14, 2001
L: 001/02	Electric Power Generation	School Tax Exemption	February 13, 2002
L: 003/02	Assessment Audit	2002 Reporting Information	January 20, 2002
L: 004/02	RM of Wood Buffalo	COPTER Applications Extension to January 31, 2002	January 16, 2002
L: 005/02	MD of Willow Creek	Assessment Roll Extension to March 31, 2002	January 21, 2002
L: 007/02	City of Edmonton	Assessment Roll Extension to March 31, 2002 Equalized Assessment Information Extension to June 1, 2002	January 31, 2002
L: 008/02	Lac Ste. Anne County	Assessment Roll Extension to April 5, 2002 Equalized Assessment Information Extension to May 3, 2002	February 5, 2002
L: 009/02	Sturgeon County	Assessment Roll Extension to April 30, 2002 Equalized Assessment Information Extension to June 1, 2002	February 5, 2002
L: 010/02	Lakeland County	Assessment Roll Extension to April 30, 2002 Equalized Assessment Information Extension to May 31, 2002	February 5, 2002
L: 011/02	Town of Cochrane	Assessment Roll Extension to April 15, 2002 Equalized Assessment Information Extension to April 15, 2002	February 5, 2002
L: 013/02	City of Red Deer	Assessment Roll Extension to April 30, 2002 Equalized Assessment Information Extension to June 1, 2002	March 5, 2002
L: 015/02	MD of Pincher Creek	Assessment Roll Extension to April 15, 2002	March 7, 2002
L: 016/02	City of Medicine Hat	Assessment Roll Extension to March 31, 2002	March 7, 2002
L: 017/02	City of Calgary	Assessment Review Board Decision Extension to May 31, 2002	March 5, 2002
L: 018/02	MD of Wainwright	Assessment Roll Extension to May 1, 2002 Equalized Assessment Information Extension to May 1, 2002	March 6, 2002
L: 019/02	Town of Chestermere	Assessment Roll Extension to March 31, 2002	March 6, 2002
L: 020/02	Flagstaff County	Assessment Roll Extension to April 30, 2002	March 6, 2002
L: 021/02	County of Grande Prairie	Assessment Roll Extension to March 31, 2002	March 7, 2002
L: 022/02	Town of Picture Butte	Assessment Roll Extension to March 28, 2002	March 12, 2002
L: 028/02	All Municipalities	Equalized Assessment Information Extension to June 1, 2002	March 2, 2002
L: 030/02	MD of Provost	Assessment Roll Extension to March 31, 2002 Equalized Assessment Information to May 1, 2002	March 19, 2002
L: 031/02	Town of Taber	Assessment Roll Extension to March 31, 2002	March 13, 2002
L: 032/02	Starland County	Assessment Roll Extension to March 31, 2002	March 13, 2002
L: 033/02	Cardston County	Assessment Roll Extension to March 31, 2002	March 12, 2002
L: 035/02	City of St. Albert	Assessment Roll Extension to March 15, 2002	March 22, 2002
L: 036/02	Cypress County	Assessment Roll Extension to April 30, 2002 Equalized Assessment Information Extension to April 30, 2002	March 15, 2002
L: 037/02	MD of Ranchland	Assessment Roll Extension to April 30, 2002	March 18, 2002
L: 038/02	Woodlands County	Assessment Roll Extension to March 31, 2002	March 18, 2002
L: 041/02	Town of Strathmore	Assessment Roll Extension to April 2, 2002	March 27, 2002
L: 042/02	County of Forty Mile	Assessment Roll Extension to April 2, 2002	March 27, 2002
L: 045/02	AR 61/2002	Well Drilling Equipment Tax Rate Regulation	April 6, 2002
L: 046/02	City of Calgary	Assessment Roll Extension to July 2, 2002 (certain properties only)	April 6, 2002
L: 047/02	Village of Hughenden	Assessment Roll Extension to April 25, 2002	April 8, 2002
L: 058/02	City of Edmonton	Assessment Review Board Decision Extension to July 31, 2002	April 30, 2002
L: 062/02	Assessment Services Branch	Appointment of Inspectors	May 5, 2002
L: 065/02	Lakeland County	Assessment Roll Extension to June 30, 2002	May 6, 2002
L: 106/02	City of Calgary	Assessment Review Board Decisions Extension to Sept. 30, 2002	July 8, 2002
L: 108/02	Town of Strathmore	Supplementary Assessment Bylaw Extension to July 17, 2002	July 4, 2002
L: 119/02	City of Calgary	Assessment Review Board Decisions Extension to October 31, 2002	July 18, 2002