

To: Mayor And Council Date: May 27, 2025

From: Kirsten Dunbar, Director of Corporate Services

Subject: Municipal Re-Classification Survey

Prepared By: Kirsten Dunbar, Director of Corporate Services

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**THAT** Committee of the Whole recommends to Council:

THAT Council RECEIVES the report titled, “Municipal Re-Classification Survey” from the Director of Corporate Services, dated May 27, 2025, and the results of the “2025 Municipal Re-Classification Survey”;

AND FURTHER, THAT no further action respecting municipal re-classification be taken.

## PURPOSE / ISSUE

Council directed staff to conduct a public survey to solicit feedback on resident’s opinion of re-classifying municipal designation from a town to a city. This report presents the findings of the survey for Council consideration.

### **Strategic Area(s) of Focus:**

Economic Health, Service Excellence and Livability

## BACKGROUND

A town may explore re-classification for many reasons: fostering economic development, acknowledging population growth and change, attracting business, enhancing visibility, and to support federal and provincial advocacy for emergent community needs.

In 2011 the Town’s population exceeded 5,000 making it eligible for city status. The 2021 Statistics Canada Census recorded Canada’s population at 5,583 and more recently BC Stats estimated the 2024 population of Creston at 6,166 residents.

In late 2024, Council directed staff to conduct community consultation to solicit public feedback regarding re-classification, prior to considering a formal re-classification process. In response, the Town conducted a survey open to the public between April 9, 2025 and May 9, 2025. The survey was available online at Let’s Talk Creston and distributed as a paper survey to all households in Creston (Appendix A).

## DEFINING THE TOPIC

### **Key Information:**

There were 218 survey respondents.

- 61.9% (135 Respondents) indicated “no”
- 24.8% (54 Respondents) indicated “yes”
- 11.9% (26 Respondents) indicated “unsure”
- 1.4% (3 Respondents) indicated “no opinion”

The survey included three open ended questions as follows:

Q5. If you answered yes to the previous question, why do you support Creston becoming a City?

- 53 responses
- Comments focused on opportunities for growth, business and resident attraction, improved public services, supporting the local economy, encouraging professionals to relocate, and the potential for more grant funding.

Q6. If you answered no to the previous question, what concerns do you have about Creston becoming a City?

- 140 responses
- Comments focused on concerns respecting an expanding population leading to crime and other perceived urban problems, not wanting to lose the small town feel of Creston, increased taxes, lack of land for industrial development, not wanting more growth and being happy with status quo.

Q7. Do you have any feedback you would like the municipality to know about potentially becoming a city?

- 115 responses
- Comments were a blend of respondents being for and against re-classifying to city status.

The complete survey results are available in “Appendix B”.

**Relevant Observations:**

The survey was intended to be a preliminary activity to help inform whether Council would like to proceed with a re-classification process. Ultimately, a municipal re-classification can only occur at the request of Council, with the approval of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, after the completion of a First Nation referrals process and finally an Elector Approval Process.

Based on the results of this survey 61.9% of respondents were not in favor of re-classifying from a town to a city. Respondents who weren't in favor noted they value the small town feel of Creston, do not want to see Creston grow population wise due to potential associated issues with urbanization, and are worried about future tax increases.

As a point of clarification, the perception that changing designation would lead to an increase in municipal taxes is not substantiated. Changing re-classification does not add additional legislative responsibilities to the Town or directly increase operational costs.

Changing municipal classification from a town to a city is a task of envisioning where the municipality is and where it wants to go. There may be minimal immediate changes associated with a re-classification; however, it could be a powerful tool to support economic development and future town planning activities.

**Essential Question:**

Does Council wish to proceed to an elector assent process for municipal re-classification?

**DETERMINE DESIRED OUTCOMES** if the essential question is addressed.

**Key Result:**

Council direction respecting next steps in a municipal re-classification process.

**Desired Benefits of Key Result:**

Council consideration of the survey feedback provided.

**Requisites:**

None Identified

**Unintended Outcomes:**

None Identified

**COUNCIL REPORT / RESOLUTION HISTORY**

- Council Direction Request "Municipal Status Change from Town to City" February 13, 2024
- Council Direction Request "Municipal Designation Change" November 26, 2024

**EXPLORE RESPONSE OPTIONS** to achieve the key result (Pros & Cons)

**Option 1:**

THAT Council RECEIVES the report titled, "Municipal Re-Classification Survey" from the Director of Corporate Services, dated May 27, 2025, and the results of the 2025 Municipal Re-Classification Survey;

AND FURTHER, THAT no further action respecting municipal re-classification be taken.

**Considerations:**

- Status Quo.
- Consistent with the results of the Survey (61.9 % of respondents).
- No additional resources required.
- Creston is one of 14 towns in British Columbia.
- Remaining a town may foster the perception of the small-town feel.
- Potential missed opportunities for increasing Provincial and Federal advocacy, grant funding opportunities, and economic development strategies.

**Option 2:**

THAT Council RECEIVES the report titled, “Municipal Re-Classification Survey” from the Director of Corporate Services, dated May 27, 2025, and the results of the 2025 Municipal Re-Classification Survey;

AND FURTHER, THAT Council AUTHORIZES staff to notify the Ministry of Municipal Affairs of Council’s intention to proceed with a municipal re-classification process.

**Considerations:**

- Inconsistent with survey results (24.8% of respondents in favor).
- Re-classification can support economic development opportunities by defining and supporting Creston’s vision of itself now and into the future.
- City status may help with advocacy with Provincial and Federal levels of government and increased funding opportunities.

**Reviewed By:**

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*Kirsten Dunbar, Director of Corporate Services*

**CAO Comments:**

*The survey produced valuable feedback and provides insight into how many of the respondents view the community and the greater valley as a whole.*

**Key Concerns:**

- **Loss of Small-Town Charm** – Many respondents value Creston's friendly, close-knit atmosphere and fear that city status would change its character.
- **Higher Taxes & Costs** – Some worry that rebranding as a city would lead to increased taxes, bureaucratic expenses, and unnecessary spending.
- **Crime & Homelessness** – There are concerns that a growing population could bring higher crime rates and more unhoused individuals. There is a belief that a "city" designation would increase both.
- **Strained Infrastructure & Public Services** – Several responses highlight the current challenges in healthcare, housing, and essential services, questioning whether Creston can support a larger population.
- **Urbanization & Overdevelopment** – Some feel that Creston should allow natural growth rather than rush into city status, avoiding excess development and environmental impact. The overall belief is that a "city" status would attract development that would force small businesses to close.
- **Lack of Clear Benefits** – Many responses indicate skepticism about whether city status would actually bring economic advantages, believing it might not significantly attract businesses or investments.

Similar to other surveys, several of the responses are not grounded in facts, such as:

**Higher Taxes & Costs** – "Our tax rate is out of control! If you compare our tax rate to other similar small towns in the province, we are the highest."

**Concerns About Crime & Homelessness** – "Higher crime rates. High immigration rates. Lack of developmental land. People move here for the 'small town' status. Increase in taxes."

Overall, the comments represent a sentiment that a change in municipal designation would equate to the loss of "small-town charm & community feel" and they don't want further urbanization that changes the town's identity.

At this time, to increase support for a designation change would require significant public consultation to increase the community's understanding of the advantages and disadvantages.

I concur with Staff's recommendation that no further action be taken towards re-classification.

**Approved for the  
Agenda By:**

  
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*Michael Moore, Chief Administrative Officer or designate*

PowerPoint: ☐ Yes ☒ No

**Attachments:**

- *Appendix A: Municipal Re-Classification Survey*
- *Appendix B: Municipal Re-Classification Survey Results*

**References:**

*No references for this report.*