

## BACKGROUND

The Special Areas Board recognizes the value of engaging with the public as a part of the municipal decision-making process and is committed to creating opportunities for meaningful public participation. Special Areas is investigating opportunities to expand access to potable water, with a focus on extending existing waterlines serviced by the Henry Kroeger Regional Water Services Commission (HKRWSC). Specific areas being reviewed include areas around Cappon, Cessford, Oyen rural (west), Scapa, Spondin, Youngstown south, and Watts.

The goal of this public engagement was to gather feedback from potential users in these areas to better understand the level of interest and inform further feasibility work.

## WHAT WE DID

Special Areas, in partnership with MPE a division of Englobe, hosted open houses in Hanna, Oyen and Youngstown in May 2025. These drop-in evening events were designed to share information on existing rural water expansion options, and to gather feedback from potential water users on how (or if) they should be changed. Residences in close proximity to potential waterline expansions were mailed information packages and invited to attend an open house. In addition, information was shared on the Special Areas website, social media, and advertised in local newspapers.

The open house events effectively engaged potential water users; over 100 residents attended these events. The open house held in Hanna had the largest number of participants with over 50 attendees. A survey was created to help collect feedback from potential users. Responses were provided using hard-copy (printed) surveys and online; responses were collected until June 15. Survey completion rates at the open houses ranged from 35% to over 80%; over 60 survey responses were provided during these events. The survey collected a total of 73 responses during the engagement period, with feedback provided from all potential water expansion areas.



## WHAT WE HEARD – INITIAL FINDINGS

Overall, we heard that individuals in areas being investigated were interested in pursuing expansions of existing potable waterlines. Based on open house attendance and survey responses, potential expansions around the Hanna area and south of Youngstown appeared to have the strongest interest.

Feedback provided through the survey indicated respondents felt their current supply of domestic water was poor (42%) or fair (26%), with only 18% indicating their water supply was good.

Sources of domestic water varied, with over 70% indicating water wells were their primary source, and over 25% indicating they hauled water for various uses (e.g. drinking, washing, etc.). Issues with declining quality of domestic water were noted, including things like low volumes, rust (iron) / bacteria / minerals present, and the need for expensive filtration systems.

The majority of respondents indicated they would be satisfied with potential service levels of 0.5 lgpm (imperial gallons per minute) if they were able to connect to a potable waterline. When asked about comfort levels with potential costs related to rural waterline expansions, the majority of respondents indicated they preferred not to answer at this time.

Finally, additional feedback provided during the open house events and through survey responses indicated strong interest in leveraging waterline extensions to construct new truck fills in some areas being investigated.

## **HOW FEEDBACK WILL BE USED**

The goal of this public engagement was to allow rural residents who may be interested in participating in rural potable waterline expansions to provide feedback to MPE a division of Englobe and Special Areas Technical (Water) Services team. This feedback will directly inform how potential waterline extension work is updated, with resulting impacts on potential project costs and technical feasibility.

Once feedback has been used to update the proposed waterline extensions, additional engagement will help confirm potential users, system designs & technical feasibility, project costs, and potential cost-sharing models. A report summarizing potential rural water expansions will be shared with Advisory Council later in 2025 to support further project development.

## **WANT TO LEARN MORE?**

For more information on this report, or on public engagement by the Special Areas Board, please contact Maeghan Chostner, Communications Officer, at:

E: [public.input@specialareas.ab.ca](mailto:public.input@specialareas.ab.ca)

P: (403) 854-5611