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MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS RESOURCE

The Municipal ERP Readiness Guide

What Canadian finance and operations leaders
should know before modernising

THIS GUIDE COVERS

- Current-state workflow friction assessment
- ERP, HCM, and civic module scoping
- Integration, hosting, and data residency questions
- Migration, testing, training, and adoption preparation
- Canadian governance, PSAB, and provincial context
- Questions to ask any implementation partner

WRITTEN FOR

CFOs & Controllers

CAOs & Corporate Services

IT & Risk Management

Tax & Utilities Leaders

00 How to Use This Guide

This guide is for Canadian municipal leaders assessing, planning, or beginning a modernisation of property tax, utility billing, permitting, licensing, fund accounting, asset management, work order, or citizen portal workflows. It is not a vendor pitch. It is a set of questions, frameworks, and context to help you think clearly before a formal software selection or implementation process begins.

Work through each section relevant to your role. Use the checklists as internal discussion tools. Take the questions into your next planning or steering committee conversation.

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Canadian Context

This guide reflects Canadian municipal operating realities: PSAB reporting requirements, provincial procurement frameworks, Canadian data residency expectations, assessment authority data sources (MPAC, BC Assessment, SAMA), and the operating calendars — budget-close, tax levy, billing cycles — that shape every implementation timeline.

01 Understanding Your Current-State Workflow Friction

Before evaluating any system or implementation partner, be specific about where your current workflows are creating the most cost, delay, or risk. Vague pain leads to poor scope decisions.

Where friction most commonly surfaces in Canadian municipalities

- Property tax levy runs that require manual assessment verification before each cycle
- Utility billing exceptions that route through email with no tracked owner or resolution time
- Permit applications that stall between Planning, Engineering, and Building departments
- Licensing renewals that depend on staff knowledge rather than system-driven notices
- Asset records scattered across spreadsheets with no link to maintenance or capital planning
- Work orders for utilities and roads not connected to the asset records they affect
- Fund accounting and budget-to-actual reports that require manual assembly before council
- Citizen portal that only covers one workflow area — residents still call for the others
- Finance close cycle stretched by data quality issues from multiple disconnected systems
- Audit trail gaps that rely on institutional memory rather than system records

Three questions worth answering before you evaluate anything

1. Where does your team spend the most time on work the system should be doing? Map the workflows where manual effort is highest — levy prep, billing exceptions, permit routing, asset record maintenance. These are your highest-value modernisation targets.

2. Where does reporting confidence break down? Identify the reports that take the most preparation, are most often questioned in council, or are most frequently unavailable when needed. Fund balances, arrears, budget variance, and capital reporting are common pressure points.

3. Where do things fall through the cracks between teams? Handoff failures between billing and finance, between planning and building, between operations and asset management — these are system design problems and they are solvable.

Section 01 — Readiness check

- Workflows where manual effort is highest are mapped across civic and finance operations
- Reports that take the most preparation to produce are identified
- Handoff points where work most commonly breaks down between teams are documented
- Workflow problems are distinguished from process design problems
- The highest-priority modules among the ten are broadly agreed internally

02 The Ten Civic and Operational Modules Worth Assessing

Canadian municipalities procure ERP across a specific set of functional areas. These ten modules represent the workflow areas where implementation depth matters most — and where generic ERP deployments most often fall short.

Primary civic and operational modules

01 Utility Billing

Account management, billing cycles, meter reads, arrears, collections, exception handling, and online resident account access.

02 Property Taxation

Assessment imports, levy configuration, notices, penalties, arrears, payment tracking, collections, and online tax account portal.

03 Permitting

Building permit intake, application routing, review workflows, inspection scheduling, permit issuance, condition tracking, and fee collection.

04 Licensing

Business licence applications, renewals, animal licensing, fee collection, records management, and bylaw compliance tracking.

05 Fund Accounting

Fund ledger management, PSAB-compliant accrual accounting, reserve fund tracking, deferred revenue, capital fund accounting, and year-end fund reporting.

06 Budgeting

Capital and operating budget preparation, amendment workflows, budget-to-actual variance, multi-year forecasting, encumbrance tracking, and council budget reporting.

07 Citizen Portal

Online payments, utility and tax account access, permit and licence status, application history, account linking, and third-party payment processor integration.

08 Asset Management

TCA register, asset classification, depreciation, condition tracking, maintenance scheduling, disposal workflow, PSAB capital reporting, and GIS integration.

09 Planning & Development Permitting

Development application intake, referral management, zoning and subdivision review, condition management, agreement registration, and provincial approval stage compliance.

10 Utility & Transportation Work Orders

Utility maintenance work orders, road and transportation work orders, crew scheduling, time and materials against work orders, asset condition updates, and capital vs. operating cost classification.

Supporting ERP modules

HR and payroll, general finance (GL/AP/AR/bank reconciliation), and procurement and inventory are part of every complete municipal ERP scope. They are implemented alongside the civic modules above — but they are not the primary reason a municipality undertakes modernisation. Scope them thoroughly; just don't let them dominate the conversation.

03 Thinking About ERP and Civic Workflows as One Model

The most common scoping mistake in municipal modernisation is treating civic modules and finance as separate projects. They share data, share staff, and share reporting requirements.

Why the connections matter

A utility payment posts to accounts receivable. A permit fee flows into cash receipting and the general ledger. A work order cost posts to a fund and a TCA record. An asset disposal triggers a fund accounting adjustment. When these workflows live in separate systems, every handoff is a failure risk and every report requires manual assembly.

Disconnected model	Integrated ERP model
Utility billing and finance on separate systems — AR reconciliation is manual	Utility billing feeds AR directly — reconciliation is structural
Property tax levy creates a receivable in a different system — posting is manual	Tax levy creates the receivable in the same ledger — no manual posting
Work orders tracked in a separate system — cost-to-asset connection requires effort	Work orders linked to asset records — maintenance history and cost accumulate automatically
Asset depreciation calculated externally — TCA schedule rebuilt at year-end	Depreciation runs automatically — TCA schedule is a report, not a rebuild
Budget vs. actual requires extraction from multiple systems	Budget-to-actual available on demand from one data source
Permit fee collection not linked to finance — cash posting is a separate step	Permit payment triggers cash receipting and ledger entry — connected workflow
Citizen portal covers one area — residents call for the rest	Single portal covers utility, tax, and permit accounts — one resident login

20–40%

Lower manual handling in levy and billing lifecycle workflows

30–60%

Faster billing exception and permit application turnaround

25–50%

Less duplicate data handling across billing, finance, and operations

Implementation-oriented targets validated against scope and operating context — not sector-wide benchmarks.

Section 03 — Readiness check

- In-scope modules are defined — and out-of-scope ones are also agreed

- Connections between civic workflows (tax, utility, permits) and finance are understood
- Phased vs. full-scope delivery has been discussed against internal capacity
- Shared data between workflow areas is identified and flagged for migration
- Ownership of each workflow area for a cross-functional implementation is assigned

04 Preparing for Migration, Testing, Training, and Adoption

Most implementation failures are not platform failures. They are migration, adoption, and continuity failures. These areas deserve as much planning as configuration.

Data migration

- Identify all data sources for every in-scope module — legacy system, spreadsheet, and manual record. Civic modules often have more source systems than finance modules.
- Assess data quality in your legacy systems before scoping migration effort. Poor data quality in assessment imports, asset records, or permit history is the most common cause of go-live delays.
- Plan for multiple migration cycles — extract, cleanse, validate, load, reconcile — not a single-pass migration. This applies especially to assessment, utility account, and asset data.
- Confirm which data will be migrated historically, which will be migrated for day-one opening balances, and which will be archived in a read-only legacy environment.
- Define who owns data validation on your side. Migration validation cannot be delegated entirely to the implementation partner.

Testing and sign-off

- Insist on UAT structured around real municipal workflow scenarios — a levy run, a billing cycle, a permit intake-to-issuance sequence, a work order creation and close.
- Confirm who owns sign-off for each workflow area and that those people have protected time in the UAT schedule.
- Define go-live readiness criteria before UAT begins — not after issues surface. What does "ready to go live" mean for property tax, for utility billing, for permitting?
- Plan your go-live date around your operating calendar — not the project plan. Avoid levy run windows, payroll close, billing cycles, and budget submission deadlines.

Training and adoption

- Request role-based training built around actual workflow scenarios — not system-feature walkthroughs. A tax administrator should train on the levy workflow, not on menu navigation.
- Confirm that administrator training equips your team to manage the system and configure routine changes without external support after go-live.
- Account for collective agreement requirements around system-use training, process changes, and any operational changes that affect how union staff perform their work.
- Define what adoption means in the first 90 days — and how you will measure it.

Canadian Context — Municipal Operating Calendar

Canadian municipal implementations must account for: annual tax levy run windows, utility billing cycle dependencies, fiscal year-end, budget-close blackout periods, and payroll processing windows. Identify all of these in discovery and build them into the project plan. Any go-live date must be validated against your specific operating calendar — not a generic project timeline.

Section 04 — Readiness check

- All data sources for in-scope modules are identified and data quality is assessed
- Migration approach is agreed — stages, ownership, and validation criteria
- UAT is confirmed to be structured around real municipal workflow scenarios
- Protected time in the UAT schedule is secured for the people who own each workflow
- Training plan accounts for roles, timing, and collective agreement requirements
- Go-live date is validated against the municipal operating calendar

05 Canadian Governance, PSAB, and Provincial Context

Canadian municipalities operate under a specific governance, compliance, and data environment that shapes how ERP must be configured, hosted, and managed.

PSAB and public-sector financial reporting

The Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) sets the financial reporting standards for Canadian municipalities. Full-accrual accounting, tangible capital asset (TCA) reporting, fund-based reporting, and disclosure requirements shape how ERP finance and asset modules must be configured — not just what data is entered.

- PSAB PS 3150 requires all tangible capital assets above the capitalisation threshold to be recorded, classified by category, assigned a useful life, and depreciated on a full-accrual basis. This is a configuration requirement, not a reporting afterthought.
- Fund-based financial statements under PSAB require revenue, expense, and equity reporting by fund. The fund ledger structure must be configured before any transactions post.
- Deferred revenue, restricted funds, and reserve fund accounting have specific PSAB treatment that differs from commercial accounting. Confirm the implementation partner understands these distinctions.
- Financial statement note preparation — TCA continuity schedule, reserve fund statements, long-term debt schedules — should be considered in reporting scope.

Provincial variation — key considerations by province

Province	Assessment authority	Key legislation / framework	Notable consideration
Ontario	MPAC	Planning Act · MFIPPA · Ontario Building Code · O.Reg. 588/17	OMERS pension · MFOA reporting · Asset management plans required under O.Reg. 588/17
British Columbia	BC Assessment	Local Government Act · FOIPPA · BC Building Code	CUPE frameworks · PIPA privacy · Integrated cadastral fabric for GIS
Alberta	Municipalities (via MGA)	Municipal Government Act · FOIP	AUMA governance · Provincial budget submission requirements
Saskatchewan	SAMA	Municipalities Act · LAFOIP	SARM requirements · SAMA data format specifics
Manitoba	Municipal Assessment Agency	Municipal Act · FIPPA	Unique assessment appeal process · provincial audit requirements
Other provinces	Varies	Provincial legislation varies	Confirm assessment authority, pension framework, and privacy legislation before scoping

Section 05 — Readiness check

- PSAB compliance requirements are included in the implementation scope
- TCA categories, useful life assumptions, and depreciation methodology are defined
- Fund ledger structure is mapped before configuration begins
- Province-specific assessment authority integration requirements are addressed
- Data residency requirements are confirmed and the hosting region is verified
- Applicable provincial legislation — privacy, planning, asset management — is identified

06 Questions to Ask Any Implementation Partner

These questions apply regardless of which implementation partner you are evaluating. They are designed to surface operational depth — not sales capability.

About municipal and civic module experience

- Which of the ten civic modules have you implemented — and in which Canadian municipalities?
- Have you implemented property tax with MPAC, BC Assessment, or SAMA integration?
- Have you configured fund accounting for PSAB compliance in a Canadian municipality? Can you walk us through how the fund ledger is structured?
- Have you worked in municipalities using the same legacy systems we are replacing?
- Can you walk us through how you would approach our utility billing or levy workflow specifically?

About implementation methodology

- How do you structure discovery for civic modules — what do you produce, and who reviews it?
- How do you scope and document integration touchpoints — assessment data, payment processors, GIS?
- At what point is scope formally agreed and signed off? What happens when scope needs to change?
- How do you manage data migration — how many cycles, who validates, what is the reconciliation standard?
- How is UAT structured? Who designs the test scenarios, and how is go-live readiness defined?
- What does hypercare cover, and for how long? Does it run through the first billing cycle and levy run?

About Canadian context and procurement

- How do you approach PSAB compliance in ERP finance and asset management configuration?
- Which Canadian data centre regions will our data be hosted in, and how is this documented?
- Are you familiar with MERX, BidNet, and cooperative purchasing frameworks?
- How do you handle provincial variation in planning legislation, pension frameworks, and privacy requirements across different Canadian provinces?

Red flags to watch for

- Scope defined by modules, not by workflows — signals limited operational depth
- Data migration treated as a late-stage activity, not a parallel workstream from discovery
- UAT described as "a few weeks of testing" with no workflow-specific scenarios
- PSAB compliance not raised until you ask — a partner with municipal depth raises it first
- Hypercare defined as a number of days, not as coverage through the first real operational cycle
- Civic module references absent — only commercial or US public-sector implementations offered
- Assessment authority integration scoped as "TBD" rather than as a defined integration spec

- No mention of municipal blackout periods or operating calendar in the project plan

07 Role-Specific Readiness Checklists

Use these checklists in your internal conversations before engaging any implementation partner or entering a formal procurement process.

For CFOs, Controllers, and Financial Planners

CFO / Finance — Pre-engagement checklist

- Civic modules driving the most AR, reconciliation, and reporting burden are identified
- PSAB reporting requirements are documented — TCA categories, fund structure, reserves
- Current close cycle timeline and key delay points are understood
- What on-demand reporting for council and management would look like is defined
- Chart of accounts and fund structure redesign needs are assessed
- Audit trail weaknesses are identified — where records depend on institutional memory
- Canadian data residency requirements are defined and raised with prospective vendors

For CAOs and Corporate Services Leaders

CAO / Corporate Services — Pre-engagement checklist

- Civic workflows most visible to residents and council are mapped — permitting, licensing, portal
- Adoption risk is understood — union agreements, training timelines, change communication
- Municipal blackout periods are identified and protected in any project timeline
- Departments required in discovery and UAT for each workflow area are named
- Governance requirements for procurement are understood — council approval, committee reporting
- Internal capacity to support an implementation alongside normal operations is honestly assessed

For IT and Risk Management Leaders

IT / Risk — Pre-engagement checklist

- All legacy systems being replaced or integrated are listed with data formats and owners
- Assessment authority integration requirements are documented — format, frequency, validation

- Data residency requirements and their legislative basis are confirmed
- RBAC and SoD requirements across civic and finance modules are defined
- Data quality in legacy systems is assessed — especially asset records and utility accounts
- Post-go-live configuration change management process is established
- Platform release cycle impact and regression testing obligations are understood

For Tax and Utilities Administrators

Tax & Utilities — Pre-engagement checklist

- Full property tax lifecycle is documented — assessment import through levy, notice, arrears, collection
- Full utility billing lifecycle is documented — account setup through billing, reads, exceptions, portal
- Legacy systems being replaced are identified with data migration requirements
- Exception workflows currently running through email are listed and flagged for redesign
- Citizen portal coverage gaps are assessed — which areas residents still call about
- Assessment authority integration dependencies and data quality issues are identified

Ready to discuss your workflows?

A 30-minute Municipal Workflow Review is the natural next step. We review one or two of your current workflow areas, map the friction in the current state, and show you what improvement looks like in your operating context — with no obligation attached.

Book at civic.pcl.one/workflow-review