

## 2004 Survey Response Summary

### Dear Stakeholders,

This newsletter is an overview of the 2004 MGB client feedback survey, a brief update on the MGB caseload and an explanation of the Board's commitment to improving the timeliness of its decisions.

Total Sent Out:	405
Total Return:	259
Return Rate:	64%
E-mail:	55%
Phone:	45%

### Client Satisfaction Survey

First thank you for participating in the 2004 client satisfaction survey. Similar to last year, this year's survey was undertaken by an independent survey firm. This year the survey included all the Board's clients including those that participated in property assessment appeals, linear complaints, equalized assessment complaints, subdivision appeals, intermunicipal disputes and annexation proposals.

The Board appreciates the constructive suggestions for improvement and the positive feedback provided by all. Adjudication of issues where there are winners and losers is a difficult environment. Considering the environment of board hearings in which 50 per cent of parties may receive an unfavorable decision, the board strives to ensure that 80 per cent of parties who appear before it are satisfied or neutral regarding the board's services and processes. The Board accepts these many challenges and continues to seek improvement in all facets of its operation to ensure the best service to the parties who appear before it.

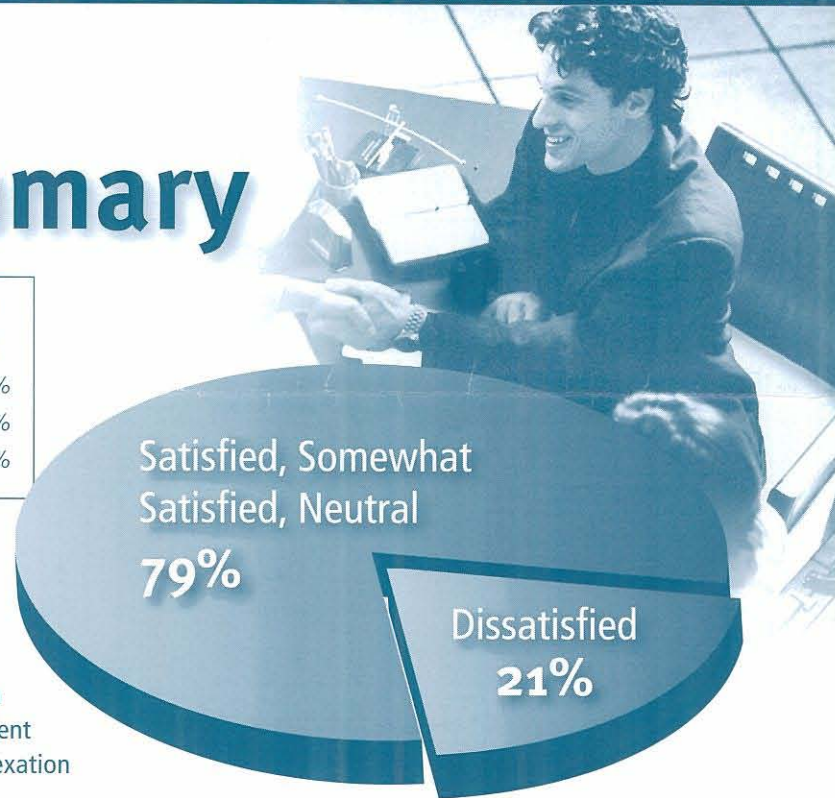
### Caseload

When the MGB was created in 1995 it inherited a considerable backlog of property assessment appeals. Through the determined work of the parties, the Board and its staff this backlog has been eliminated. The Board is now currently active in completing the 2004 appeals filed in late 2004 and in early 2005.

### Commitment to Timeliness

Based on previous feedback from clients the MGB has placed increased emphasis on the timely delivery of its decisions. Statistics for the timely deliverance of decisions are included in this newsletter in graph form.

*Gerald C. M. Thomas, Chairman*

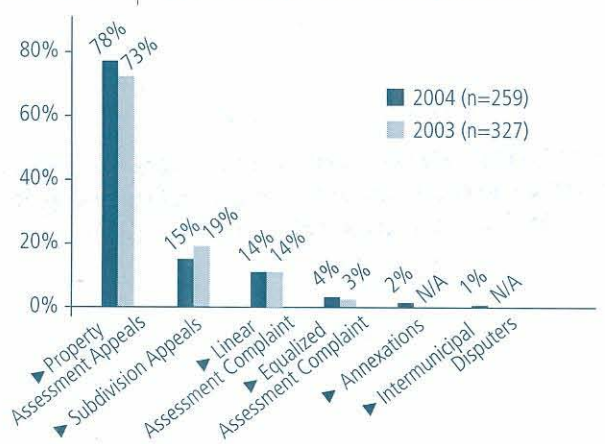


## Who Responded

### Client Profile

The majority of parties who appeared before the Board appeared on property assessment appeals. In many cases a client can appear before the Board on numerous occasions and attended more than one type of appeal hearing and in one or more roles. Clients surveyed said they attended appeal hearings as shown in the following table:

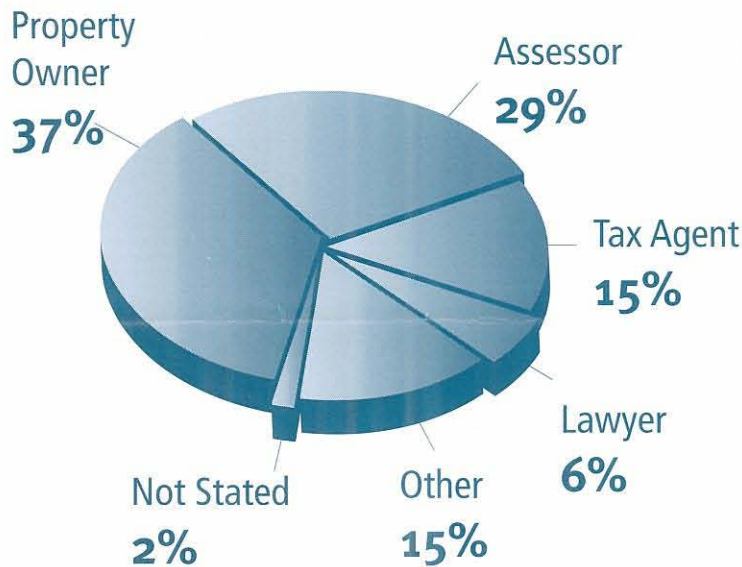
Figure 1 | Type of Appeals Participated In



## Who Responded *continued...*

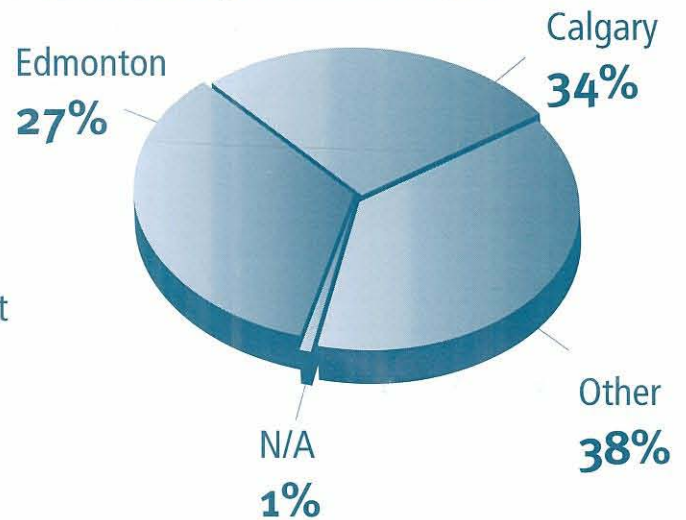
### ► Stakeholder Background

Individuals who responded to the survey attended hearings in the following capacity:



### ► Location of Stakeholder

Individuals surveyed attended hearings in:



Activity levels increased in 2003/04 in terms of total numbers of appeals/complaints and total numbers of hearings. Figure 2 below outlines the activity levels in all types of cases that are appealed to the MGB. The chart also shows the trend of increased activity is continuing. This trend is made more significant as appeals are becoming more complex in nature, with increased involvement by expert witnesses and legal counsel. These factors all affect responses made by clients on their satisfaction level regarding MGB practices, procedures and decision-making.

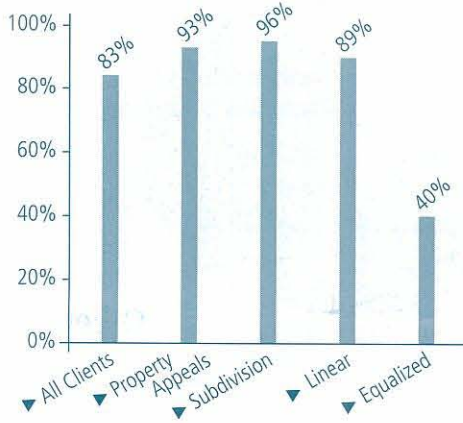
► Figure 2 | **Municipal Government Case Load**

	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Property Assessment	1,720	8,130	6,553	4,666	5,236	3,082	3,152
Linear Assessment	6,787	11,875	9,221	11,873	27,580	3,487	9,372
Equalized Assessment	6	3	2	2	1	1	1
Subdivisions	31	27	35	36	53	47	43
Annexation	21	20	10	20	10	14	9
Disputes	3	2	2	0	1	1	9
Rehearing/Reviews	16	14	17	12	7	12	16
Preliminary Matters	6	25	40	55	65	75	94
Written Decisions	304	250	272	281	248	268	287
Number of Hearings	524	883	1,035	1,147	1,158	1,233	1,535

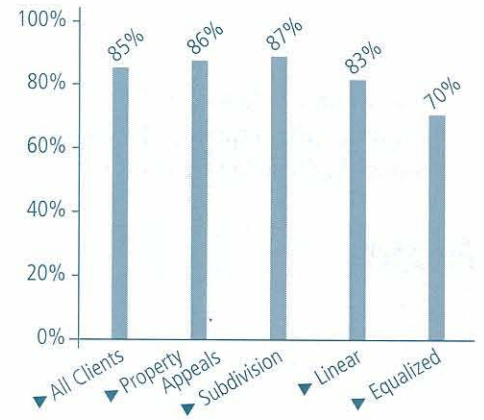
► **Satisfaction by Type of Appeal:**

Considering the adversarial nature of the matters before the MGB where one party may win and one party may lose, the overall satisfaction with the processes used by the Board is relatively high. The results include those parties that indicated that they were satisfied, somewhat satisfied or neutral. The neutral category represented approximately 11% of the responses. By considering a neutral response as falling to the satisfied client allows the Board to focus on those responses, which are somewhat dissatisfied or dissatisfied. Figure 3 presents client responses on satisfaction levels in regards to overall MGB services and Figure 4 satisfaction levels of the MGB’s scheduling processes. Both sets of responses are provided by appeal type.

► Figure 4 **Satisfaction with Scheduling Process**



► Figure 3 **Per Cent Satisfied with Overall MGB Services**



## Scheduling Responses

► **Satisfaction with Scheduling:**

The Act sets timelines for the hearing of each type of appeal and this places scheduling constraints on the Board and the parties. However, wherever reasonably possible the Board attempts to accommodate the parties in achieving mutually agreeable dates. When necessary the Board will seek time extensions if it does not create a backlog of appeals. Figure 13 contains client satisfaction responses to specific questions on scheduling practices.

► Figure 5 **Client Responses to Scheduling**

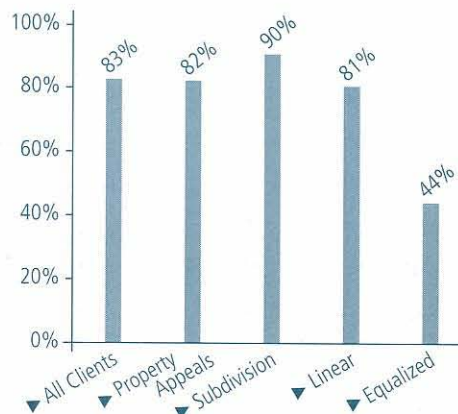
	Agreed
Staff were courteous	97%
Staff easy to access	92%
Scheduling communications clear	89%
Staff responsive to party needs	90%
Timely notices	89%
Scheduling procedures straightforward	87%

## Hearing Processes & Treatment

► **Satisfaction with the Hearing:**

Parties were asked to provide their response on the hearing process, whether it was fair and impartial, and how they felt they were treated at the hearings. Responses were generally favourable as shown in Figures 6 and 7. Figure 8 gives results of satisfaction levels for hearing facilities (see next page).

► Figure 6 **Satisfaction with the Hearing Process**



► Figure 7 **Satisfaction with the Hearing Components**

	Agreed
Treated in a courteous manner	92%
Sufficient opportunity to present cases	93%
Hearing was straightforward	92%
Hearing was fair, impartial & unbiased	75%

## Hearing Processes & Treatment *continued...*

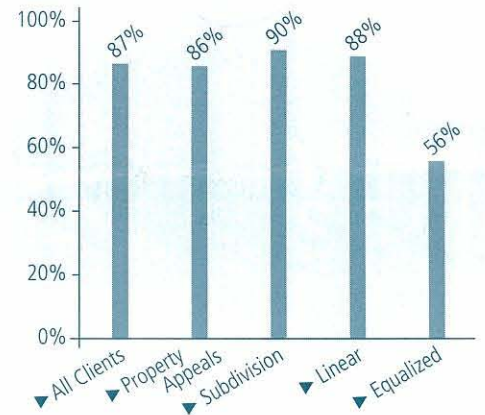
► Figure 8 **Satisfaction with Hearing Facilities**

	Satisfied
Location of Edmonton hearing facilities	94%
Layout of Edmonton hearing facilities	90%
Location of Calgary hearing facilities	85%
Layout of Calgary hearing facilities	90%
Locations outside Edmonton/Calgary	90%

► Figure 10 **Satisfaction with Oral and Written Decisions**

	Agreed
Oral decisions clear and easy to understand	87%
Written decisions clear and easy to understand	87%
Timeliness of written decisions	63%

► Figure 9 **Satisfaction with Decision Delivery**

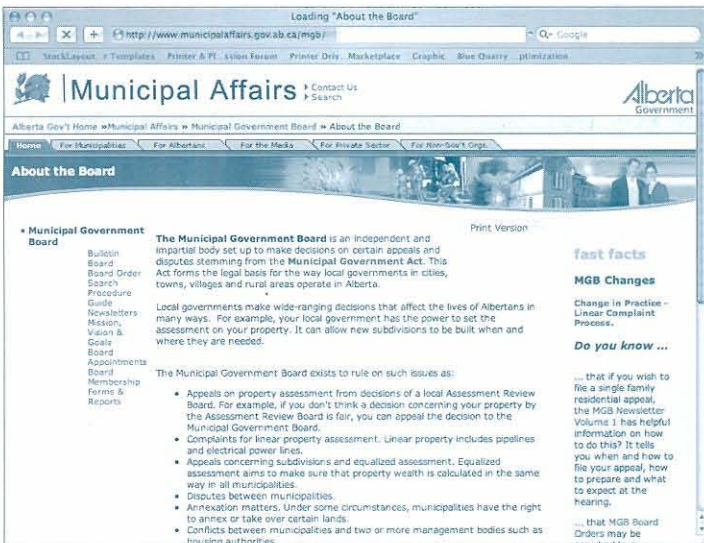
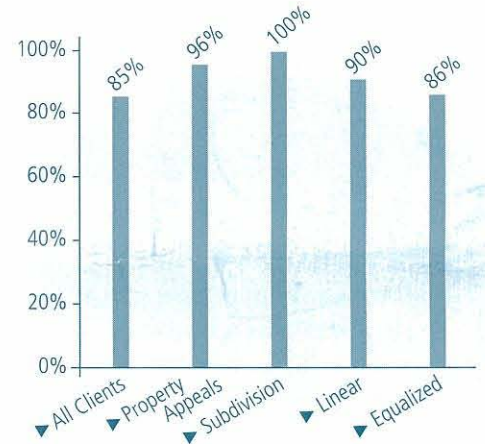


## Website

► **Satisfaction with MGB Website:**

The MGB Website has been operational since the late nineties. The site provides access to board decisions, search options, and board procedures as well as information as to the background of board members. Sample information from the homepage is shown below. Figures 11 and 12 outline client information regarding their satisfaction with the MGB website.

► Figure 11 **Satisfaction with MGB Website by Type**



► Figure 12 **Satisfaction with MGB Website**

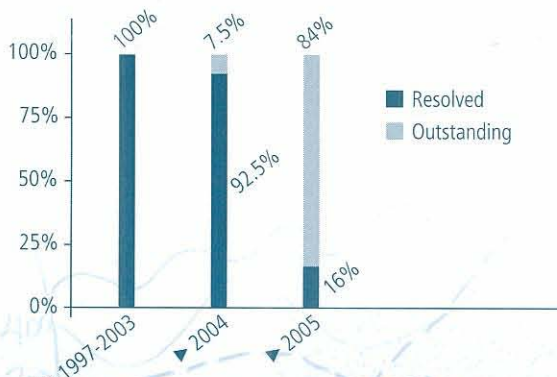
	Agreed
The website provided useful information	92%
The website was easy to use and navigate	91%

# Outstanding Caseload

As stated earlier, the majority of the MGB's caseload is property assessment appeals. Since alleviating the large backlog of previous years the MGB has annually addressed the outstanding property assessment caseload so that it is working on the current year appeals. Current year appeals generally arrive late in the assessment year or early in the following year. This year parties asked that the majority of 2004 appeals not be heard until spring of 2005. Therefore, the MGB delayed hearing the 2004 appeals until early this spring. By the time the 2004

appeals were being heard the 2005 appeals were already arriving. Other types of appeals including linear complaints have seen a steady increase over recent years, both in hearing numbers and the complexity of issues that are to be decided. The number of preliminary and/or jurisdictional matters has also been on the rise which leads to increased time and resources to hear and decide appeals. Figures 13 and 14 show the outstanding case load for linear complaints and property appeals. The MGB has been aggressive in working with parties to schedule and hear complaints prior to the new assessment year. Currently only a few 2004 appeals are left to be heard.

► Figure 13 | **Linear Property Assessment Complaints 1997-2004**



► Figure 14 | **Total Hearing Status Property Assessment Complaints – Dec. 31, 2004**

Year	Outstanding	Complete
2002	19	997
2004	710	349



## Outstanding Caseload *continued...*

### ► Subdivision Caseload:

The subdivision appeal caseload before the Board is relatively modest, however, it has slowly been growing over the years. The modest number is because the Act limits the Board's jurisdiction to subdivision appeals where the proposed subdivision is located adjacent to a water body, a numbered highway, or a wastewater treatment plant. Annually the MGB is currently receiving in the range of 50 appeals per year as can be seen in figure 15. Each appeal is fully case managed by professional MGB staff.

### ► Annexation Caseload:

In the case of annexations the MGB serves a limited role as a hearing and recommendation body. The Minister and Cabinet have the final authority on annexation applications under the Act. Annexation applications are fully case-managed to assist parties engaged in the process. Figure 16 outlines applications in recent years.

► Figure 16 | **Historical Annexation Case Load**

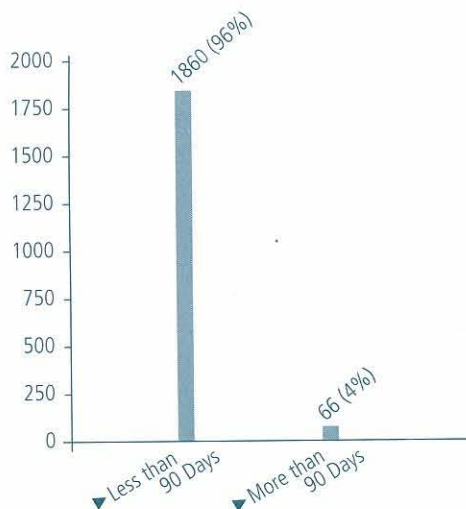
Year	No. of Applications Received
2000/01	10
2001/02	20
2002/03	10
2003/04	14
2004/05	9

► Figure 15 | **Historical Subdivision Case Load**

Year	No. of Applications Received
2000/01	35
2001/02	36
2002/03	53
2003/04	47
2004/05	43

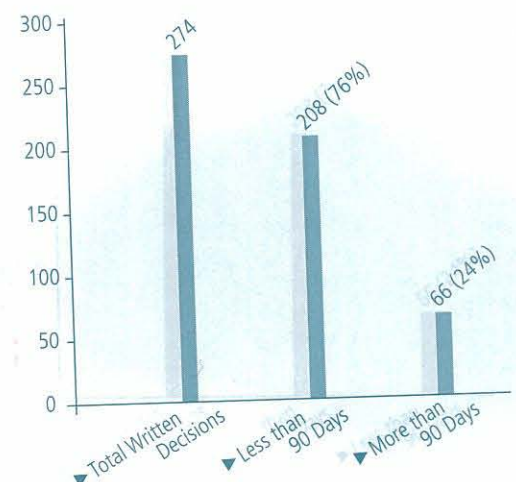
## Decision Timeliness

► Figure 17 | **Timelines of Decisions – March 1, 2004 to Feb. 28, 2005**



The feedback of parties appearing before the MGB has prompted the MGB to be increasingly conscious of the time taken to issue decisions. The MGB can issue oral or written decisions. During the last year approximately 85% of decisions were oral. As part of its commitment to parties who appeal before it, the MGB has established a 90 day target for issuing written decisions. Figure 17 shows the timing results of all decisions made by the MGB over the last year and figure 18 shows the results for written decisions. Written decisions are in the form of a full board order or a decision letter.

► Figure 18 | **Timing of Written Decisions**



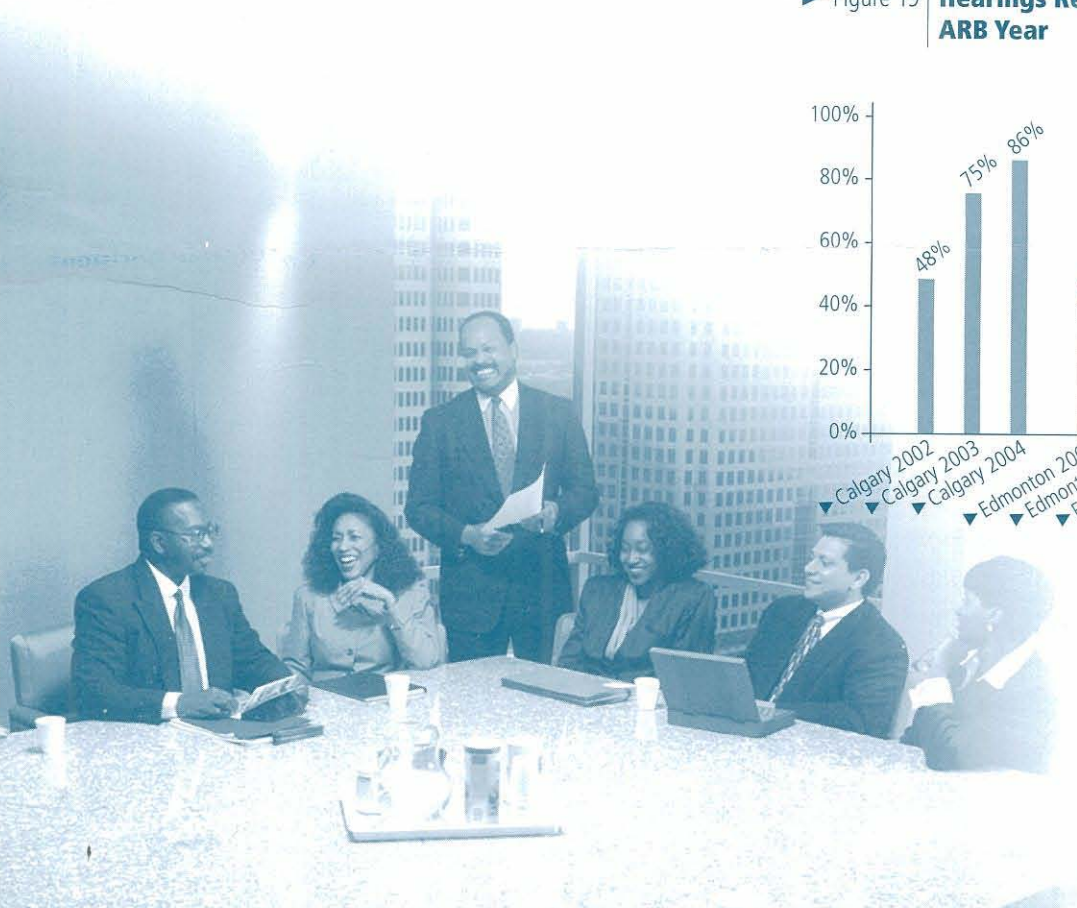
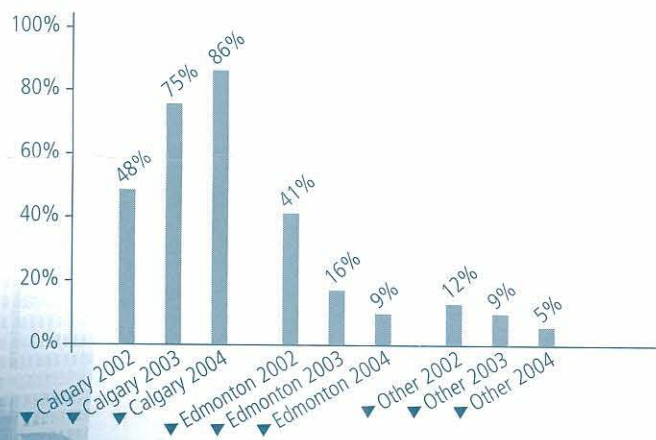
## New Initiatives/Working with Clients

The MGB in meeting with client groups and as a result of responses received from client surveys has set in place a number of initiatives to improve its performance and be more responsive to clients. Included within these initiatives are ongoing efforts to improve communication and the use of special projects to resolve or ascertain opportunities to correct existing problem situations. Following are specific actions and strategies of the MGB:

- Conduct major agent/respondent party meetings for the purpose of establishing communication to enhance and expedite both the scheduling and hearing of the appeals/complaints received
- Regular review of administrative practices and procedures to determine if there are opportunities to increase operating efficiencies resulting in offering better service levels to our clients
- Monitor appeals to maintain timeliness and comply with our goal of scheduling hearings within our timelines
- Work with Stakeholders to expedite scheduling, hearing and resolution of appeals
- Conduct Linear Stakeholder workshops to increase the level of understanding of the process, one another and to improve communication
- Ensure adequate and appropriate resources are in place to handle the full cycle of an appeal while achieving the legislated timelines
- Upcoming implementation of "Case Inc" database – a joint venture between the City of Edmonton's ARB and MGB to electronically handle the caseloads

The MGB historically received in the range of 90% of all of its property assessment appeals from the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, with similar amounts from each city. Figure 19 shows a shift in activity in the last two years.

► Figure 19 | **Hearings Received by ARB Year**



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## APPOINTMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS

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Membership consists of persons from across the province of various professional backgrounds with training and experience in the matters adjudicated by the Board. The professional backgrounds of the Board members consist of appraisers, assessors, farmers, realtors, lawyers, engineers, planners, architects and other professions.

Members are appointed through a public recruitment competition which involves professional screening of backgrounds and experience, initial interview with a stakeholder group, a second interview that includes applied written and oral case studies, reference /security checks with final appointment by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The Municipal Government Board is a working Board requiring a commitment of 10-15 days per month from its members. The initial training period for new members takes approximately five months. Additional training is conducted throughout the year for all members. Recruitment for new members takes place every two to three years. New member recruitment is integrated with the gradual retirement of older members to ensure that parties before the Board continue to have the appeals heard by professional and experienced adjudicators. The next new member recruitment will be taking place in the fall of 2005 to fill or replace a small number of vacant positions.



### An introduction to the Municipal Government Board

#### What is the Municipal Government Board?

The Municipal Government Board (MGB) is a quasi-judicial tribunal set up to adjudicate appeals and disputes as provided for in the *Municipal Government Act*.

#### Who are the MGB members?

The Municipal Government Board (MGB) is an independent and impartial Board appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to hear matters pursuant to the *Municipal Government Act*.

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#### Municipal Government Board

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Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4L4

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Fax . . . . .780.427.0986

#### What are the powers of the MGB?

The MGB adjudicates matters in accordance with the MGA, the principles of administrative law and the tenants of natural justice. Decisions of the MGB are final subject only to judicial review by the courts. The MGB has jurisdiction to hear complaints and/or appeals in the areas of property, linear and equalized assessment; subdivisions, inter-municipal disputes, annexations and any other matter referred to it by the Lieutenant Governor in Council or the Minister.

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