



Minutes
March 14, 2025
Peace Valley Inn, Emerald Room
Peace River, Alberta

Attendees (In Person):

Carolyn Kolebaba	Chair, Northern Sunrise County
Donna Buchinski	Town of Falher
Elaine Manzer	Town of Peace River
Gary Rycroft	Town of Beaverlodge
Vern Lymburner	Town of Valleyview
Philip Kolodychuk	MD of Fairview
Kate Potter	Town of Sexsmith
Nick van Rootselaar	MD of Spirit River
Agnes Roshuk	Village of Nampa
Josh Knelsen	Mackenzie County
Robert McLeod	Town of Manning
Brian Panasiuk	Town of High Prairie
Stacey Messner	Town of Grimshaw
Shelly Shannon	Town of Peace River
Kelly Bunn	MD of Peace
Robert Willing	MD of Peace
Albert Poetker	Birch Hills County
Murray Kerik	MD of Lesser Slave River
Robert Brochu	MD of Smokey River
Tyler Airth	Big Lakes County
Jim Zabolotniuk	Big Lakes County
Margaret Jacob	Town of McLennan
Barb Miller	Town of Peace River
Nicole Johnson	Village of Berwyn
Jackie Clayton	City of Grande Prairie
Rory Tarant	City of Grande Prairie
Terry Ungarian	County of Northern Lights
Jim Rennie	NAEL Executive Director
Kayla Parsons	Town of Peace River (Recording Secretary)

Attendees (Zoom)

Becky Ketchum	Town of Wembley
Karen Rosvold	Rural Municipalities of Alberta
Gerhard Stickling	County of Northern Lights
Cary Merrit	Saddle Hills County
Cindy Millar	Northern Sunrise County

Bob Marshall	County of Grande Prairie
Julie Melville	Town of Rainbow Lake
Allan Rowe	Clear Hills County
Daryl Greenhill	Town of Fairview
Joulia Whittleton	County of Grande Prairie
Amber Bean	Clear Hills County
Leanne Beaupre	County of Grande Prairie

1. Call to order

Chair Kolebaba called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Greetings from Mayor Elaine Manzer, Town of Peace River

We acknowledge the homeland of the many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples, whose ancestors have walked this land since time immemorial. We are grateful to work, live, and learn on the traditional territory of Treaty 8.

Updates from Peace River:

Approval of a new 84-unit apartment building on the West Hill between No Frills and the Chevrolet Dealership.

Working on a LUB Refresh, anticipated to be completed June 2026. Lots of new, modern changes.

AB Transportation is seeking a new contractor to complete the new bridge construction.

Working on formation of newly mandated policing committee.

Glad to hear the Province is bringing back the Grants in Lieu of Taxes program.

Hot Tub replacement project is still ongoing. The hot tub has been out of commission for several years. Project has been tendered twice with only one submission received each time. Project quoted significantly over budget.

Conducting the Enabling Housing Choices project with the Rural Development Network.

Experienced two apartment fires last year.

Two part time nurse practitioners are joining the hospital soon.

Upcoming events: Jet boat races in June; dodgeball tournament in May.

Request to be allowed to record meeting.

Chair Kolebaba asked attendees if anyone objected to recording the meeting.

No objections were received.

Adoption of Agenda

MOTION: Donna Buchinski, Mayor, Town of Falher, moved to adopt the agenda.

CARRIED

Roundtable and Introductions

Requested by Becky Ketchum, Councillor, Town of Wembley, to include during roundtable: how your community is tying your economic development planning to attraction and retention of medical professionals?

Gary Rycroft, Mayor, Town of Beaverlodge

Have not tied economic development to attraction of medical professionals.

Collaborate with their regional partners for attraction and retention of medical professionals.

Breaking ground soon for construction of new medical facility; \$1.7M project over approximately 3 years.

Vern Lymburner, Mayor, Town of Valleyview

Valleyview has been in the news lately regarding Council's decision to move the library from its current location. Will be meeting with 2SLGBTQ+ group to discuss their concerns over this decision, and reassure them that they will still have a home at the library's new location.

Last year, Council tried to change how the mayor is elected, switching from election at large, to electing from the group of seven councillors. However, there was an error in the adopted procedure, so they are required to revert back to the mayor being elected at large.

Encouraging a shop local campaign.

Traffic Circle – Valleyview is no longer on the hook for the entire \$6M upgrade. Thank you to everyone for assistance in getting to this place.

Donna Buchinski, Mayor, Town of Falher

Passed their new Land Use Bylaw on Tuesday.

Received funds through climate change management grant for the ice at the arena, switching to 'Ready-Ice' that is supposed to be compatible with cold water flooding. This did not work. Cold water flooding does not fill divots in the ice, etc. The players did not like the change and had to move the location of their playoffs because of the issues. Will be going back to flooding with warm water.

Alberta Municipalities has videos on their website for people thinking about running for Council. Lots of good information.

Physician recruitment - have a standalone committee for the area; has been operating for over 20 years, very successfully; 5 regional communities. Have a coordinator for the role that all communities pay for. They are currently seeking one doctor.

Philip Kolodychuk, Reeve, MD of Fairview

MDP is just about complete and likely to be passed at the next council meeting.

Director of Public Works retired after 30+ years.

Hired a new CAO.

Have five doctors now; three arrived in December.

Disappointed in the Provincial budget re Northwest Polytech

Applied to do upgrades to the college to bring in more students

Only received \$1M for upgrades in GP campus.

Kate Potter, Mayor, Town of Sexsmith

Attraction/Retention is part of their Economic Development Strategic Plan but does not tie to doctor attraction and retention specifically.

Offer incentives to new businesses to set up in Town, including no interest loans and tax breaks. Significant development to hopefully come through in the next couple months – mix of residential and commercial.

Undertaking some significant storm water infrastructure projects.

Looking into P3 Recreation Centre – if anyone has done this before, would love to hear from you suggestion to reach out to Whitecourt as they might have.

Elaine Manzer, Mayor, Town of Peace River

Attraction and retention:

Town supports the Peace River Shell Rotary House. Provides temporary housing for medical professionals.

Also have a Peace Regional Healthcare Attraction & Retention Committee, with representatives from around the region

Doctors are looking at amenities – housing, schools, recreation, culture, etc.

Alberta Energy is looking to develop a nuclear powerplant, potentially in the region. Have formed a Regional Energy Committee who have been actively engaged with Alberta Energy on this potential development.

Woodland Cree First Nation bought 32 acres in town and have applied to convert the lands to urban reserve. Admin will be negotiating agreements etc., for services.

Hired a Business Retention Specialist (i.e. Economic Development Officer).

Nick van Rootselaar, Deputy Reeve, MD of Spirit River

Dealing with same challenges discussed at last meeting in Grimshaw

Meeting with Agriculture and Transportation ministers

Healthcare update:

currently fully staffed – first time in a long time.

Housing is an issue, working on affordable housing initiatives

Looking at urban acreages – a lot of interest expressed for this type of housing.

Agnes Roshuk, Deputy Mayor, Village of Nampa

Council representative sits on the Peace Regional Healthcare Attraction & Retention Committee.

Gearing up for a summer of infrastructure work.

Josh Knelsen, Reeve, Mackenzie County

Medical attraction and retention philosophy: embrace what we have. Stand firm in our culture/beliefs/values. Showcase what we have and be proud, it will attract those that share your values. This has been working well.

Birthing centre being built soon
Biggest issue right now is Provincial downloading.
Don't have an enforcement issue – we have a Justice issue.
Well capping under provincial mandates continues.

Robert McLeod, Mayor, Town of Manning
Healthcare attraction and retention:
High school experience – 5 stations set up to imitate experiences working in the medical industry.
Currently have enough doctors and nurses.
Town offers housing and paid utilities.
Need to be looking at what is strong and important in our communities and build on that
Our arena brings people together; fun rivalries; builds community spirit.
New school and lodge developments are coming along. Only small finishes left. Frustrating trying to get the contractors to come back to finish the projects.
Finding more speed trap locations in speed change zones. Doesn't think this is right.

Brian Panasiuk, Mayor, Town of High Prairie
Hired a new CAO.
Signed contract to put in a splash park this summer.
Had issues with recycling costs and had to temporarily pull recycling. Residents were not happy. But Town is hopeful the problem will be solved by incoming EPR program and newly sourced recycle program pricing.
Healthcare attraction and retention:
Work with doctors' families, make them feel welcome.
Issue: rental accommodations. Looking for solutions. How do we encourage developers to build?
Town also contributes money towards rent if professionals are coming from out of country.

Stacey Messner, Deputy Mayor, Town of Grimshaw
Healthcare attraction and retention:
Chair of Healthcare Committee in Grimshaw, which consists of representatives from regional municipalities.
Ec Dev is an important part of their committee. Ec Dev officers know what is going on which helps enable the committee to promote the community. Work with Lac Cardinal Economic Development.
We have a dedicated page on our website to showcase what the Town has to offer.
Grimshaw's committee is very active. Healthcare professionals work hard for us, so we must work hard for them.
This is the third year of our scholarship program.
There are 6 scholarships available: \$2,000 each
4 graduating from university this year – hopeful to have some come back and work in the region.

Starting to review program stats and reevaluate – do we need to make any changes?
Considering a return to location for work condition.
It is important to have a relationship with RhPAP. They have great programs.

Shelly Shannon, Councillor, Town of Peace River
Most updates covered by Mayor Manzer.
We have a strong Economic Development Committee.
“Grow your own” – instilling values in the younger generation which bring them back to the community.

Kelly Bunn, Interim CAO, MD of Peace

Robert Willing, Reeve, MD of Peace
Kelly Bunn is currently Acting CAO. Actively searching for a new CAO.
Involved with the Regional Energy Committee.
Healthcare attraction and retention:
Already covered by Grimshaw & Peace River. Have representatives that sit on Grimshaw’s and Peace River’s Healthcare Attraction Committees.
Still waiting to hear from the Province regarding funding for the wildfire that happened last year.
Feels like they are hitting a brick wall. It took over 8 months to get the investigation report, but it was so heavily redacted that it did not give a lot of information.

Albert Poetker, Reeve, Birch Hills County
Healthcare attraction and retention:
Work with their surrounding municipal partners.
Clinic is fully staffed; but there is still a long waiting list.
Doctors not seeing the same number of patients as doctors in years past.
Short housing. Many doctors are coming from out of country and cannot commute. They need housing in the community, close to the hospital/medical facility.
Pleasant View lodge is not fully staffed yet.
Oil company went bankrupt. Will have a large shortfall in taxes because of this. Not sure how much can be recovered in liquidation as they appear to have run everything down. AER dropped the ball in keeping them accountable earlier.
Renewing gravel pit permits in the County.
Public Works needs another \$65k for archaeological and paleontological studies. Feels like this was downloaded and should be a Provincial responsibility.
Discussions with Nucleon Energy for a SMR development.

Murray Kerik, Reeve, MD of Lesser Slave River
Also have a Healthcare Attraction/Retention Committee formed
Operating room closed because there is no anesthesiologist.
New ambulance garage should be open this summer.

A lot of work on LUB and MDP.

Removed keeping of animals and put into a different bylaw.

No movement on the Smith bridge or highway 88. Province says engineered drawings are complete.

Also, no movement on Highway 2 repairs, not even engineered drawings.

Just bought new public works equipment. Brace yourselves, prices have gone up.

Hired a new assistant CAO. Hopeful this will help with succession planning.

Robert Brochu, Reeve, MD of Smokey River

Oil companies make up a large percent of the MD's tax base. Collection is not looking good.

Hoping companies are not so run down that people won't want to buy.

Also involved in discussions with Nucleon Energy re nuclear development.

Windmill situation

Still forging ahead. Anticipated timeline: AUC review/approval in 2026. Construction 2027.

Operational 2029.

Crime issues are the same.

New Hemp plant has start off slow but is moving ahead. Will likely start producing hemp fibers this summer.

Has been an elected official for 30 years. Will not be running in the next municipal election.

Tyler Airth, Reeve, Big Lakes County

Healthcare Attraction & Retention:

Similar situation to many. Hospital is staffed but RNs are green and still gaining experience.

Doctors' opinion on staffing levels vs. AHS's is very different.

EMS is an issue. Working on potential solutions - get more local interest. Would like to see schools get involved, maybe a shadow day program could be arranged.

Not a lot of grants for paramedics.

EMS - 16 positions but only 8-11 are filled. A lot of people doing double shifts or coming in from other areas.

Bridging program partnership between Northern Lakes College and Athabasca University with the goal of bringing in RNs.

Hoping to "grow local". Training healthcare professionals locally (with the exception of doctors).

One hamlet in the County has grown but the rest have shrunk.

Regional Ec Dev advocacy group, made up of multiple Rurals and First Nations, has been working really well and has been helpful in conducting studies. County falls in a weird spot between the Provincial REDAs.

Industry projects – black bear project; wind project (near swan hills); SMR project.

Margaret Jacob, Councillor, Town of McLennan

EC Dev Board established to address some issues

Over the past year, have built a foundation and now they are ready to move ahead.

Two major employers in Town – the hospital and nursing home lodge.

Problem with healthcare support worker retention.
Looking at working with the Urban Renewal Stream.
Ec Dev Board is working very hard; they are very progressive and ready to work.
Town works with the Healthcare Attraction/Retention group formed by the MD. They are doing great work.
Lacking commercial rental space and housing. Any available commercial space has high rental rates.
Next election will see a reduction in number of Councillors – from 7 to 5.

Barb Miller, CAO, Town of Peace River
Started our CPO program
Hired a Director of Protective Services. Building our CPO program. Another CPO starting April 1.
Hopefully will help address some of the social disorder and encampment issues the Town has been experiencing.

Nicole Johnson, Mayor, Village of Berwyn
Purchased new equipment for Public Works. Small crew so they work hard to keep the community cleared of snow, etc.
Houses have been selling, which is good.
Small group working to bring back Berwyn Fiesta.
Ec Dev/Healthcare Attraction & Retention – looking at a Nurse Practitioner Attraction Policy.
Hoping to attract one to the village. Could offer low-cost space to set up their practice.

Jackie Clayton, Mayor, City of Grande Prairie
Healthcare Attraction & Retention:
Healthcare attraction and retention have been a priority of Grande Prairie Council. They have seen great success in attracting Healthcare specialists.
Worked with person in charge of HC recruitment and attraction at AHS.
Also developed a “concierge service” which tours prospective doctors around the community.
Have found this very helpful.
Have signed ~90% of the specialists they have met with.
Now focusing on family practitioners.
Financials are not the only factors doctors consider.
Working on a new attraction program to assist in attracting healthcare professionals. Will be a three-year program. E.g. the first year may give qualifying individuals access to passes for municipal facilities, etc. The second year WestJet vouchers, etc.
Also developing a Healthcare Ambassador program. This will serve as a conduit for new doctors to learn about the community, where to go, what to do, etc. (i.e. will onboard people into the community).
Used to hold a Mayor’s Physicians event. Have now pivoted and are focusing more on the families - bouncy castles and BBQ event. This has been fairly successful.

32 members will be graduating from the GP Police Services course. Should have 50+ officers by summer. Full transition is expected to occur in 2026. If so, this would be ahead of schedule. Have seen a lot of interest in this program and have increased class sizes from 12 to 14. Received applications from +/- 200 people interested in taking the class. Also bringing on experienced members.

Terry Ungarian, Reeve, County of Northern Lights

Healthcare Attraction & Retention:

CNL does not have an Economic Development Officer at the moment.

CNL participates in three healthcare attraction/retention committees: Grimshaw, Peace River, and Manning.

Manning was approved by AHS for a fourth physician. There is a doctor interested and are in the process of completing their Canadian exams.

Purchased a house for medical workers to utilize. It is strategically located near the hospital.

Attended the refocusing workshop put on by AHS.

Most regions are short EMS personnel.

Suggestion for the Province/AHS – get qualified driver to drive the ambulance. This way, you don't need two EMS trained individuals in the ambulance. Could assist in the interim with short staff issues.

Established the Regional Energy Committee (REC). It consists of five member municipalities – CNL, Northern Sunrise County, MD of Peace, Town of Grimshaw, and Town of Peace River.

Formed almost a year ago.

Acts as liaison between residents and energy companies proposing nuclear development

Have received a lot of information from Energy Alberta.

Energy Alberta just held an open house at the Webberville Hall. 400 people attended. Great turnout; great conversations.

Attended SMR summit in Sherwood Park last week. Received a lot of valuable information.

Another nuclear conference is coming up in Ottawa. REC will send a couple representatives.

Joined the Canadian Association of Nuclear Host Communities. Located in Clarington, Ont.

AGM is at the same time as the conference. Hope to attend and learn more about being a host community.

Just had the Alberta Pond Hockey Championships at Lac Cardinal. It was a successful event.

Growing the North Conference. CNL is a Silver Sponsor. It was a great event. AI was talked about a lot. USA change of government and tariffs were also largely discussed.

Community Rail Advocacy Alliance (CRAA) – continuing to push for more consistent rail service.

Just did an op-ed in the Ottawa area about the importance of Rail Service.

Town Hall meeting this week to review water policy. Looking to revise the Policy based on some issues experienced last year.

The County's picker truck and steamer were stolen. Recovered but damaged. Ongoing investigation. Will have an impact on insurance premiums.

Attendees Zoom:

Kelly Peterson, Mayor, Town of Wembly

Healthcare Attraction & Retention:

Looking at all options to keep local clinic open after their physician announced they are leaving.

Town of Bashaw gave a presentation as to what they are doing for physician retention. They have a different way of doing things.

Hopefully an affordable living complex will be breaking ground this summer.

New daycare waiting on licensing.

Karen Rosvold, Rural Municipalities of Alberta

2025 Spring RMA Conference kicks off on Monday

For the first time RMA will be having a closed session for members only.

4-year governance review will be reported at the conference.

Gerhard Stickling, CAO, County of Northern Lights

Cary Merrit, CAO, Saddle Hills County

Running rural potable waterlines. \$50+ million spent over the last few years to undertake this project.

Project Aurora – connecting county residents to fiber internet.

Constructing a raw water intake on the Peace River (near Dunvegan Bridge). Tender is expected to close at the end of April.

New health clinic open and fully occupied.

Also opened a clinic for a nurse practitioner at the county office. NP was hired and has 250+ patients.

Cindy Millar, CAO, Northern Sunrise County

Energy Alberta's Website: <https://www.energyalberta.com/>

Bob Marshall, Reeve, County of Grande Prairie

Healthcare Attraction & Retention:

County has a committee for attraction and retention

NW Polytech and U of A are partnering to bring a medical program to northern Alberta –

Northern Alberta Medical Program (NAMP). This program will start this fall.

Maskwa Medical Centre – Province has signed off on the Land. Project is moving ahead.

Global Agri-Tech conference in San Francisco this week. Sent a delegation to promote agriculture.

World Petrochemical Conference in Huston this month (largest petroleum conference).

AI, power generation, data centres, race between China and the USA. Canada has a huge opportunity right now.

RCMP looking to locate a detachment in Clairmont.

Preparing for wildfire season.

Julie Melville, Deputy Mayor, Town of Rainbow Lake
NW Health Centre provides a doctor once or twice a week.
EMS being pulled from the community is a concern.
Community's biggest issue: lack of a grocery store. The nearest store is 140km away. One of the reasons residents are leaving the community.
Kicking off the Winter Carnival tonight. Great event that brings the community together.

Allan Rowe, CAO, Clear Hills County
Working on preparing the election voter list

Daryl Greenhill, CAO, Town of Fairview
Participating in the Enabling Housing Choices project with Rural Development Network.
Community has very little housing/rental stock.
Received the small community opportunity grant for sustainable growth project – business plans in a box.
Lots of events planned for this summer.

Joulia Whittleton, County Manager, County of Grande Prairie
Away from screen when called upon.

Amber Bean, Reeve, Clear Hills County
Working on fiber optic internet installation for the County with a local company.
Development - still planning for a fire hall.
Ecological Corridors in the area for species at risk (e.g. Caribou).

Leanne Beaupre, Councillor, County of Grande Prairie
Has decided not to run in the next election.
It has been a pleasure working with everyone. Thank you for the learning, friendship, and comradery. Wish all those running again the best!

Donna Buchinski, Mayor, Town of Falher added:

- Falher has now lost their local bank branch. This was a very disappointing decision. Bank was not open to any discussion, not even to keep the ATMs operational.

MOTION: Vern Lymburner, Mayor, Town of Valleyview, moved to accept the round table introductions for information.

CARRIED

Adoption of the Minutes

MOTION: Robert Willing, Reeve, MD of Peace, moved to adopt the Minutes of the November 8, 2024, meeting, as presented.

CARRIED

Old Business

Update on meeting between NAEL and NADC

A delegation on behalf of NAEL met with Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC). MLA Tany Yao, chair for NADC was in attendance.

NAEL representatives asked NADC to consider hosting an investors conference in the North. NADC said they would take the suggestion under advisement.

NAEL would also like to know when the Rural Caucus is coming to northern Alberta?

NAEL also asked NADC to resume championing for the North. This used to be a consistent practice by NADC but has fallen into silence.

NADC said they are working on a strategy.

NADC did not provide any comments regarding their stance on nuclear development

Suggested Action Item: Start copying NADC on all NAEL advocacy letters. Will help keep NADC informed regarding issues members are facing.

Question: NADC is supposed to have a report coming out. When is this scheduled to happen?

A: No confirmed date but hopefully soon. Supposed to be a very detailed report with a lot of recommendations for the Province.

Comment: Town of Grimshaw noted the NADC has donated money to scholarship programs.

MOTION: Robert McLeod, Mayor, Town of Manning, moved that NAEL write NADC to inquire about NADC's obligations/mandate for the north.

CARRIED

New Business

Acceptance of Financial Report

Some municipalities have not paid their 2024 and 2025 membership dues.

Action Item: in the future it would be helpful to have the years split out in the report.

May be of benefit to do a review of expenses and membership fees to ensure we are collecting enough funds and spending within our means.

Jim Rennie: Budget forecast – once we collect outstanding fees, we should be fine for this year and likely next year. Could be a good discussion for the end of the year as to how the group wants to move forward.

Action item: Create a list of outstanding invoices and Chair Kolebaba will follow up.

MOTION: Stacey Messner, Deputy Mayor, Town of Grimshaw, moved to accept the financial report with verbal comments, for information.

CARRIED

MOTION: Terry Ungarian, Reeve, County of Northern Lights, moved that the meeting move into closed session in accordance with FOIP s. 21-24.

CARRIED – 12:13 p.m.

Meeting recording was paused. Virtual attendees verified their locations met closed session requirements.

Discussion on 2025 Provincial Budget (closed session, per FOIP Act Sections 21-24 Intergovernmental Affairs)

MOTION: Brian Panasiuk, Mayor, Town of High Prairie, moved that the meeting return to open session.

CARRIED – 12:41 p.m.

Chair Kolebaba recessed the meeting for lunch at 12:41 p.m.

Chair Kolebaba resumed the meeting at 12:49 p.m.

Presentations

Rory Tarant, Director of Invest Grande Prairie - Electricity Market Presentation

Have been conducting some advocacy focused on distribution charges.

Most other Provinces have only one distribution provider. Alberta is unique with more than one. Distribution is aggregated and split among those in the region. Fewer residents equals less people to split the distribution amongst.

ATCO (northern Alberta distributor) has the highest distribution rates. Nearing 3.5 times higher than what larger centres are paying.

This disparity continues to increase as time goes on

5.5% of household income is being spent on energy. \$4800/year. Distribution is 25% of this average.

More difficult to quantify larger industry impact. But they are paying significantly more than the FORTIS services area.

60% of energy demand in the ATCO service area is driven by industrial customers. Advocating that more of the Province should pay for this as everyone benefits

2023 and 2024 ATCO lost \$130M worth of distribution infrastructure due to wildfire. This has not helped.

Electricity generation is across the Province.

Grande Prairie has done a significant amount of advocacy on this.

Resolutions presented and passed at AB Munis and RMA.

AB Munis resolution is up for renewal. Will bring it again at the conference this fall.

We understand living in the North means we pay more but shouldn't be to such a high degree.

Province is aware of the issue. There is a piece of legislation coming forward with some revisions; however, they are struggling with the distribution piece. They were looking at how to equalize the entire province. However, the City of Calgary was not on board. EPCOR (City of Edmonton) was on board. Legislation slated to come forward in the fall, so there is still a window.

Will continue to advocate.

Grande Prairie – will keep the group posted on electricity distribution advocacy. Likely send forward a couple ideas in preparation for RMA conference.

CN – Monty Armstrong, Fire Prevention Officer and Erik Lundgard, Supervisor for Alberta North Overview of operations across Canada and specifically Alberta

Reviewed advancements in technology made in recent years to improve safety

Autonomous Track Inspection Program (ATIP) – proactive infrastructure risk management.

Technology Mechanical – Inspection Portals – successfully identified risks on tracks.

Wayside Detector technology – helps identify a problem before it can cause a significant issue, particularly with wildfires.

Poseidon, Neptune, and Trident – specialized train cars that can be deployed to help with fire suppression.

Have 20 tank cars filled with water placed strategically throughout the rail network as a fire mitigation strategy.

Developed two incident-training facilities.

Looking at various wildfire technologies to improve early detection.

Question: How are you controlling your ROW along the tracks for fire prevention?

A: you can report issues on our website. This year we have changed how far from the ROW we spray for weed control. This should help to remove problem vegetation.

Question: There is a lot of garbage – ties, steel, etc. – located in many of the Hamlets that CN Rail runs through – is there a plan to clean this up?

A: Yes, we are building a plan to clean up the ties, etc. There are a lot throughout the rail system, but we are plugging away at it. There is only one place in Canada we can ship them to for disposal. They are currently backed up, so then we get backed up. All railways in Canada are struggling with this.

MLA Reports

Honourable Dan Williams, MLA Peace River and Minister of Mental Health and Addictions (MHA)(1:11 p.m.)

MHA – addressing a number of problems all at once.

Public addiction crisis. People are living intermittently homeless, living in encampments that can be dangerous.

There is rising public disorder.

People dealing with addiction/mental health crisis deserve dignity and treatment and our communities deserve safety

Compassionate intervention - building a northern and southern facility for this (budget has \$180M). Projecting 150 beds per facility. In the meantime, province is looking to set up 50 beds in the north and 50 in the south, so we can start project immediately, instead of waiting for the capital build to start.

E.g. one person overdosed 186 times in Alberta. This is not okay. This is not compassionate.

If someone is a danger to themselves or others, they can receive mandatory treatment. Will also be replacing the under 18 legislation

Looking to make other changes as well. E.g. modifying the need for an officer to stay and wait with the patient, reducing the time officers need to spend waiting in hospitals.

All of this is reviewable by the courts to ensure that we maintain a balance.

Also looking to create legislation creating hire standards at treatment and detox facilities.

Revamping how we deal with mental health.

Need to do more for early intervention and address basic needs.

Yes, the government is part of the solution, but the purpose is to partner with individuals, families, and communities, creating pathways to access necessary services.

Local update:

A lot of work going on in our communities.

Great team of MLAs for Northern Alberta.

Provincial budget:

Huge amount of value for school projects happening across the north.

Just under half a billion when it comes to infrastructure and capital, including highway upgrades/repairs.

Comment: Sorry to see that an increase in FCSS program funding was not provided in the 2025 budget. This IS a preventative program and ties into what you are saying about early prevention. So, it is very disappointing this was not increased.

Question: Northern Alberta Medical Program – we need physicians teaching. If they are already short staffed, how will they have time to teach? How can they train other rural doctors? Would like to see support for this program so it can be brought to fruition successfully.

A: Yes, agreed.

Question: Can we get a treatment centre at the PRCC?

A: There is a plan to bring Therapeutic Living Centres to all correctional facilities. Some already have them, but the Province is looking to expand the program, including Peace River. The program is showing positive results in locations it is already running.

Question: the Education Minister cut some school programs that could also serve as early intervention. Where is the disconnect?

A: This was a pilot project started during COVID. It was renewed for one year based on feedback; however, funding for this was not indefinite. There is work to be done but we also don't want to see schools turning into mini hospital units.

Leanne Beaupre, Councillor, County of Grande Prairie – Government of Alberta announced \$35 million in funding for a 50-bed long-term addiction recovery facility, in Clairmont. Anticipate doors opening in 2027.

Advocacy

- **Action Item:** NAEL to request a meeting with Premier Smith.
 - Premier Smith may be scheduled to be in our region in June and usually attends the La Crete Rodeo. Perhaps suggest that we arrange the meeting during this time.

MOTION: Shelly Shannon, Councillor, Town of Peace River, moved that NAEL write a letter to Premier Smith requesting a meeting.

CARRIED

Date and Location of next meeting

June 13, 2025 at 10:00 a.m., hosted by Town of Beaverlodge

What would you like on next agenda?

- Northern Alberta Medical Program – Dr. Richard Martin
- presentation from NADC
- Also need to encourage our MLAs to attend these meetings

Motion to adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 2:04 p.m.