

November 3, 2023

Quasi-Judicial Agencies Member Committee Report Released

The report includes eight recommendations to better integrate municipal plans and perspectives into AUC, AER, and NRCB project approval processes

The RMA [Quasi-Judicial Agencies Member Committee](#) (QJAC) has completed their work and released a [final report](#) and an accompanying [summary report](#). Since being formed in May 2023, the committee met five times and undertook significant research and analysis related to the Alberta Utilities Commission, Alberta Energy Regulator, and Natural Resources Conservation Board, particularly how their approval processes impact rural municipal land use planning.

The following members are serving as district representatives:

- ◆ District 1: Kelly Christman, County of Newell
- ◆ District 2: Brent Ramsay, Red Deer County
- ◆ District 3: Doug Drozd, County of Barrhead
- ◆ District 4: Tyler Airth, Big Lakes County
- ◆ District 5: Cindy Trautman, Camrose County
- ◆ Chair: Jason Schneider, District 1 Director (Vulcan County)

The QJAC report takes a deep dive into how each quasi-judicial agency approves projects currently, how these processes impact municipalities, and how processes could be improved to better integrate municipal plans and perspectives into project approvals, which will better align the agencies' actual processes with their public interest-based mandates. The report includes the following sections:

- ◆ The Committee Membership, Mandate, and Process section describes who was on the committee, what they were tasked with, and how they went about developing the information in this report.
- ◆ The Quasi-Judicial Agency Background section provides a brief overview of the Alberta Energy Regulator, Alberta Utilities Commission, and Natural Resources Conservation Board's mandates and project approval processes.
- ◆ The Municipal Perspective section examines why this issue is so important for Alberta's rural municipalities, and the local impacts of current approval processes.
- ◆ The Key Themes section summarizes the main issues heard by the committee.
- ◆ The Recommendations section includes several high-level recommendations for changes that can be made to better integrate municipal perspectives into quasi-judicial project approval processes.

Based on their research and analysis, the QJAC developed the following recommendations (each are explained in more detail in the full report):

- ◆ Recommendation 1: That the Government of Alberta and quasi-judicial agencies work with stakeholders to develop an approach to integrating land use impact assessments and reclamation requirements into all project approvals.
- ◆ Recommendation 2: That the Government of Alberta and quasi-judicial agencies work with stakeholders to develop a public interest evaluation framework to assess their decision-making and engagement processes.

- ♦ Recommendation 3: That the Government of Alberta and quasi-judicial agencies work together and with stakeholders, including municipalities, to regularly adapt approval processes to industry changes.
- ♦ Recommendation 4: That both quasi-judicial agencies and applicants play a direct role in initial project engagement processes.
- ♦ Recommendation 5: That agencies review and redevelop current notification systems to better engage with municipalities at the onset of projects.
- ♦ Recommendation 6: That the AER, AUC, and NRCB collaborate to harmonize their respective engagement and approval processes as much as possible.
- ♦ Recommendation 7: That the AER and AUC adopt NRCB requirements related to aligning projects with municipal development plans.
- ♦ Recommendation 8: That municipalities have automatic status as directly affected parties and automatic standing at all hearings.

The RMA would like to thank the QJAC members for their work over the past several months. The report and recommendations will be crucial to supporting the RMA's advocacy on this issue moving forward.

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