

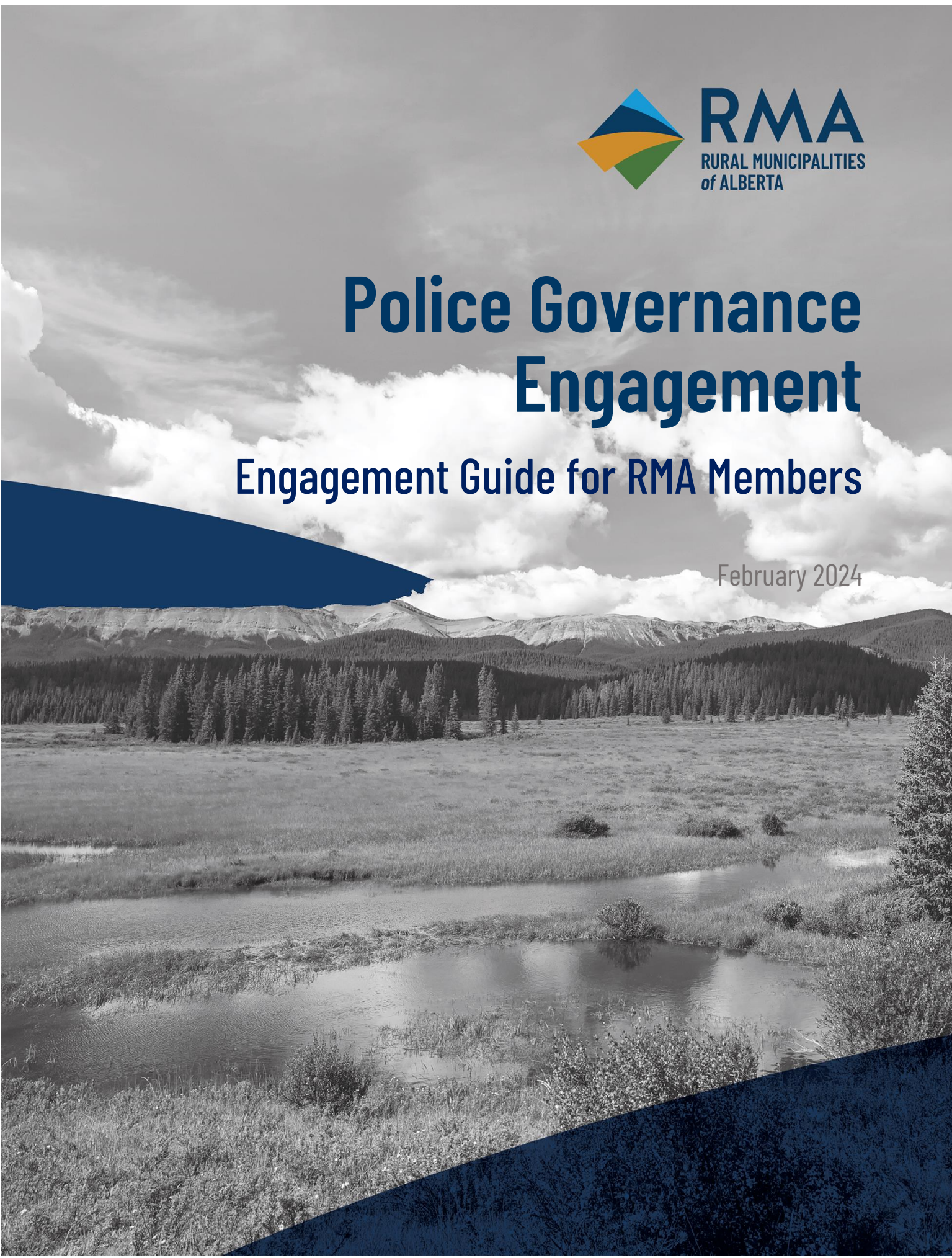


RMA
RURAL MUNICIPALITIES
of ALBERTA

Police Governance Engagement

Engagement Guide for RMA Members

February 2024



Introduction

The *Police Act* mandates the Government of Alberta to ensure that adequate and effective policing is maintained in Alberta. Following several years of engagement with stakeholders and the public, the Legislative Assembly passed the [Police Amendment Act](#) (PAA) in December 2022 to amend the *Police Act* and modernize policing in Alberta. According to the Government of Alberta the legislation was intended to increase police transparency and enhance public trust to help build safer communities. In addition to other reforms, the legislation created a requirement for the formation of civilian governance bodies for all municipalities in Alberta, with the intent for communities to have a role in setting policing priorities and performance goals.

The PAA creates several new mandated structures for municipal input into policing:

- ◆ Communities with a population of under 15,000 policed by the RCMP with a Municipal Police Service Agreement (MPSA) will be represented by regional policing committees but will have the option to form their own municipal policing committee.
- ◆ Communities with a population over 15,000 that are policed by the RCMP with an MPSA will be required to establish municipal policing committee.
- ◆ Communities policed by the RCMP under a Provincial Police Service Agreement (PPSA) will be represented by a Provincial Police Advisory Board.

While the PAA formalizes these bodies in legislation, their structure, scope, operating processes, etc. will be enshrined in regulation and policy. Determining those details is the intent of the current engagement process.

RMA position and member resolutions

At this point, there is no clear idea of what these bodies will look like, what powers they will have, and most importantly, how a single board for PPSAs will be able to adequately filter up information from so many different communities, or how they will be accountable for the municipalities that they represent. Throughout the *Police Act* review (which has been in progress for over five years), RMA has maintained the position that the best avenue to ensure local input is at the heart of community policing decisions, is for the *Police Act* to empower local committees to have a say in on the ground policing priorities, and for the Government of Alberta to provide adequate financial and capacity support to ensure each community can have a committee. This approach does the opposite; it forms a single centralized body to speak on behalf of over 300 PPSA municipalities. While this approach has a high risk of overlooking or misinterpreting local input into policing, this engagement is an opportunity for RMA members to call on the Government of Alberta to prioritize transparency and accountability for the centralized board.

Concern with small and rural communities being adequately represented in the PPAB is outlined in a recent RMA resolution:

- ◆ [Resolution 8-23F](#): Implementation of a Provincial Police Advisory Board

Engagement process

As next steps to the 2022 legislative amendments, the Government of Alberta is now developing supporting regulations to clarify the powers, duties, functions, and composition of these new governance bodies, as well as the configuration of regional policing committees. This engagement will be crucial to help the government gain a comprehensive understanding of the different needs and perspectives of Alberta's diverse communities to develop these regulations.

Written submissions are being accepted until March 15, 2024 and can be submitted through the [online questionnaire](#).

Any questions related to the engagement process can be directed to the Public Safety and Emergency Services (PSES) Engagement team at: PSES.Engagement@gov.ab.ca.

How to use this guide

This guide is intended to support RMA members in participation of the Improving Police Governance engagement.

This document is structured based on themes of the online questionnaire. The intent of this guide is to provide insight into the key themes of the engagement and an overview of considerations that should be accounted for when municipalities create their own submissions. Members can certainly use some, or all, of the content directly for their own submission but using it as a “jumping off point” for a submission that includes local perspective will likely be most effective.

Although this document is focused on the PPAB and municipalities served by the PPSA, RMA staff is also able to discuss the regional committees with members that are interested in and served by MPSAs.

RMA is currently in the process of developing written input for its own submission.

Ongoing RMA Support

Any specific questions about this guide, the engagement process, or how RMA can support members can be directed to RMA Policy Advisor Kallie Wischoff at kallie@rmaalberta.com.

Topic 1: The Provincial Police Advisory Board

Background

Once implemented, municipalities served by the RCMP under the PPSA will be represented on a provincial board that will make recommendations on province-wide policing priorities.

The powers, duties and functions of the PPAB are not outlined in the PAA and will need to be addressed in the new regulations. The PAA allows the PPAB to have up to 15 members, and the Minister to appoint members. The only pre-determined PPA positions are one from a Metis Settlements and one from a First Nation.

The PPAB will be subject to the *Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act* (APAGA). APAGA will require the board, once established, to create a Mandate and Roles document that will set out their mandate, roles and responsibilities, and processes.

RMA Questions and Considerations

- ◆ It will be difficult for one board to speak on behalf of so many unique communities across the province.
- ◆ To what extent should municipal voices be represented on the PPAB?
- ◆ Policing is complex and impacts many sectors. The PPAB must include diverse community perspectives, including from underrepresented or marginalized communities.
- ◆ Policing challenges and priorities are often regional in nature. How can one board best represent varied perspectives from different parts of the province and from rural and small urban municipalities?
- ◆ The PPAB should provide ongoing input, advice, and recommendations to the Government of Alberta and RCMP on policing in Alberta.
- ◆ The PPAB should collaborate with the Government of Alberta and RCMP to develop annual provincial policing priorities.
- ◆ The PPAB should engage with the Government of Alberta and RCMP to provide input on any policing-related issues that the Board identifies as relevant.
- ◆ The PPAB must have clear and enforceable expectations for reporting back to the communities it represents on how local input is integrated into provincewide priority development.
- ◆ The PPAB must be accountable to the municipalities it represents. If a municipality is not being heard or included in PPAB business, it should have an outlet to share this concern and have action taken.
- ◆ The PPAB must be resourced at a level that allows for ongoing, high-quality engagement with the municipalities it represents.
- ◆ The PPAB should not only be designed to represent PPSA municipalities at a provincial level, it should also serve a capacity-building function by providing advice and support to municipalities and local organizations as to how they can better engage with police at the local level.

Topic 2: Community Safety Plans

Background

Community Safety Plans (CSPs) encourage police to work more closely with civilian partners and put added focus on alternatives to enforcement that target root causes of crime, like addiction treatment, housing and employment supports.

CSPs are intended to support greater coordination between police and civilian partners, helping them identify and close gaps in services for people who need help. Greater collaboration with partners could help prevent crime, while also allowing police to devote more resources toward serious and violent offences.

While the PAA will require police to develop CSPs, there is currently no requirement for the PPAB to develop or report on CSPs.

RMA Questions and Considerations

- ◆ CSPs are community-driven strategies that require specific community-driven initiatives.
- ◆ Although implementing the CSP will involve multiple partners and collaborators, the PPAB should not be empowered to set these plans on behalf of communities. Involving the PPAB in the development of individual CSPs could result in local input being lost.
- ◆ The PPAB may be well served in a capacity-building role. This could include developing CSP guides for municipalities, offering training on CSP basics, and potentially offering facilitation support for complex or difficult CSP discussions.
- ◆ It is also important that the role of police, municipalities, and other community organizations is clarified. CSPs can be complex and impact many stakeholders in different ways.
- ◆ What happens if a municipality and detachment cannot agree on a SCP?
- ◆ How are police held accountable to following and reporting on CSPs?

Topic 3: Policing Priorities

Background

While the *Police Act* identifies several parties with a role in setting policing priorities, the responsibilities of regional and municipal policing committees in setting policing priorities are not outlined in the PAA and may be addressed in the new regulations. For example, the Minister may set priorities for policing in the province, while municipal police commissions must establish the priorities of their municipal police service, while taking the provincial priorities under consideration.

The PAA is also silent on the responsibilities of the PPAB in setting policing priorities for the communities it represents. This may be addressed in the new regulations. It is also unknown if and how provincewide policing priorities set between the PPAB, Government of Alberta, and RCMP will be operationalized locally, or how municipalities represented by the PPAB will be empowered to inform priority development or report on the extent to which the priorities are reflected in policing in the communities.

Suggested Policing Priorities

- ◆ Develop a coordinated, long-term strategy to ensure that all vacant frontline detachment positions are filled.
- ◆ Review RCMP detachment resourcing methodology to ensure it reflects community need, particularly at the local level.
- ◆ Increase efforts to target repeat offenders committing crimes in rural and remote municipalities.
- ◆ Work with municipal and community leaders to identify local priority enforcement areas and use this information to determine detachment and regional crime reduction strategies.
- ◆ Continue to support detachments in conducting proactive policing and community engagement through the increased use of Crime Reduction Units, Call Back Units, and other resources that will allow frontline officers to increase their presence in the community.
- ◆ Provide the PPAB with adequate and consistent financial and administrative support.
- ◆ Work with the PPAB to develop best practices to enhance the quality and consistency of communication and collaboration between detachments and the municipalities that they serve.
- ◆ Work with community and municipal leaders to address racism and other forms of discrimination in policing.

RMA Questions and Considerations

- ◆ Municipalities represented by the PPAB must have a direct role in informing priority development.
- ◆ Policing priorities should be reflected at the local level. If they are not, communities should have a communication channel to inform the PPAB of their concerns.
- ◆ Policing priorities should be reviewed and amended on an ongoing basis specified in the regulations.

Topic 4: Composition of the PPAB

Background

Input is needed to help inform the development of new regulations related to the composition of these committees, addressing factors such as committee size, member qualifications, and the consideration of any mandated representation.

The PAA states that the PPAB will have not more than 15 members, appointed by the Minister in accordance with the regulations, with at minimum one member from a First Nation and one member from a Métis settlement or community.

RMA Position

- ◆ Because the RMA represents rural and remote communities across the province, the RMA will serve as a key voice on the PPAB and should be considered an essential member.
- ◆ Alberta Municipalities (ABmunis) represents many small communities that are served by PPSAs and will be represented by the PPAB. ABmunis will be an essential member of the PPAB.
- ◆ All PPAB members should represent or live in municipalities that receiving policing under the PPSA.
- ◆ It is essential that the PPAB has mandated regional representation, to ensure that local input is adequately accounted for and to avoid the centralized nature of a singular board.
- ◆ Policing is complex and impacts many sectors. The PPAB must include diverse community perspectives, including from underrepresented or marginalized communities.
- ◆ All PPAB members should be required to apply through a formal process and selected based on their interest in policing and related competencies. Political appointments should be specifically prohibited.

Topic 5: Local Input

Background

Given the diverse communities that will be represented by the PPAB, it is important to examine mechanisms for community engagement and ways to ensure the board's alignment with the needs of the communities it represents.

RMA Position

- ◆ Support for the PPAB is conditional on the development of strong reporting and accountability mechanisms back to communities to make sure their positions are properly informed by the communities they represent.
- ◆ The PPAB must engage in two-way communication between the communities it represents and the government to which it is accountable. This means that the PPAB must engage with municipalities and communities to learn more about the policing and public safety issues that these stakeholders experience, as well as report back to them on related Government of Alberta and RCMP outcomes and initiatives.
- ◆ The PPAB must recognize that not all municipalities that they represent will have formal localized bodies to gather and compile community input. The PPAB must utilize varied and locally distinct engagement processes to effectively gather input from various communities.
- ◆ The PPAB should be required to develop and report on a plan for gathering input from historically underrepresented or marginalized groups within the municipalities it represents.