



February 23, 2021

Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) – Directive 067 Feedback
Suite 1000, 250 – 5th Street SW
Calgary, AB
T2P 0R4

Dear Regulator,

RE: Westlock County Concerns Regarding Proposed Changes to AER Directive 067

At the County Council Meeting of February 23, 2021 Westlock Council passed a resolution to forward a letter of concern to the AER. Westlock County has significant concerns regarding proposed changes to Directive 067 which fails to address non-payment of levied municipal taxes by Licence Holders of provincially regulated oil and gas properties.

Westlock County (for the tax years 2015 – 2019) has written off \$ 2,377,848 with an additional \$702,000 anticipated for 2020 for a total of \$3,079,848. The annual levy is approximately \$ 11,000,000.

These write-offs represent an average of 7% of our annual levy over the past four years.

Included in these write-offs is \$137,082 in uncollected School Tax and DIP Requisitions, which have been recovered through the PERC and DIRC Grant program. In addition, \$20,320 of uncollected Senior's Housing requisitions are included in the write offs and to date are not recoverable.

In principle Westlock County Council supports changes to this Directive which better protects the interests of all Alberta residents. The proposed changes to the AER that protect the required funding of the province's Orphan Well Fund and ensure the payment of all provincial fees and royalties is encouraging. It is disappointing though to see that the AER has elected to ignore calls (for more than three years now) from over eighty (80) rural municipalities seeking to ensure that the AER (and the Province of Alberta) act to protect municipal taxation and security powers relating to insolvent Licence Holders (or those continuing operations under bankruptcy protection).

Many operators are defaulting on municipal taxes owed (including School and Seniors Foundation levies) which are assessed by (and ultimately owed to) the Province of Alberta. It is disappointing that the AER has ignored these municipal calls and decided not to address these well documented and often communicated concerns.

Westlock County requests that the AER include the following three (3) necessary amendments in conjunction with the current update of Direction 067:

1. "Section 5 – Maintaining Eligibility" the AER should immediately revoke the licenses of continuing viable Licence Holders choosing not to pay all (or any) of their municipal tax obligations.
2. "Section 4.5) -Unreasonable Risk (Obtaining General Licence Eligibility)" the AER should not authorize or permit the purchase or transfer of any licences involving an existing oil or gas licence holder (or operator) currently in default of any municipal tax obligation anywhere in Alberta and
3. "Section 4.5) – Unreasonable Risk (Obtaining General License Eligibility)" the AER should initiate steps with the assistance of the Alberta Government (Municipal Affairs) to ensure that municipalities are recognized as secured creditors (through any bankruptcy involving Licence Holders) to secure and collect that municipality's (and the province's) taxes levied and owed.

Alberta's rural communities are the municipalities that own and are expected to safely maintain the important infrastructure necessary for the oil and gas industry to succeed. As a partner in this success the fair assessment and collection of municipal taxes (including provincial taxes levied for school and seniors) is foundational to the support and maintenance of this infrastructure by our municipality.

Sincerely,



Jared Stitsen
Reeve

cc: Glenn van Dijken, MLA
Shane Getson, MLA
Provincial Caucus
Member Communities – RMA
Member Communities - AUMA