LIFE IN THE HEARTLAND (LITH)

Regional Advisory Committee

Meeting Details

Date: Thursday, October 1, 2026 | Scheduled time: 5:00–8:00 PM (MT)

Location: Lion's Mane Room, Dow Centennial Centre | Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta

Attendees

Industry Representatives (IRs):		**Public Members (PMs):**	
AIHA	Mark Plamondon	Public Member	Al Montpellier
AIHA	Conal MacMillan	Public Member	Anne Ryan
Dow Canada	Ryan Weyland	Public Member	Barb Gamble
Dow Canada	Jess MacDonald	Public Member	Vikki McLaren
HAMP	Nadine Blaney	Public Member	Lana Santana
HMA	Brenda Gheran	Public Member	Marg Booker
IPL	Isabel Penaloza		
IPL	Kim Benedict		
IPL	Alyssa Pratt	**Facilitation:**	
Keyera	Judith Campos	LITH	Sheena Fitzpatrick
MEGlobal	Amanda Vandenburg	Facilitator	Shawna Bruce
MEGlobal	Scott Maetche		
NCIA	Patrick Howe		
NCIA	Chantal Delfs		
Nutrien	Cory Wald		
NWR	Karla Johnston		
Sherritt	Greg Poholka		

Meeting Agenda and Scheduled Proceedings

5:00 PM Dinner

5:45 PM Opening & Objective — Shawna Bruce

5:55 PM Data Centre Briefing — AIHA and Sturgeon County

6:15 PM Conversation Round 1 — four facilitated tables

6:40 PM Break (10 minutes)

6:50 PM Conversation Round 2 — table rotation

7:15 PM Discussion Summary & Priority Setting

7:40 PM Wrap Up & Next Steps

8:00 PM Next Meeting & Adjournment — February 2027 (date TBD)

Opening & Data Centre Briefing

The meeting was structured as a pulse-check and misinformation-triage discussion concerning the Meta data centre approved for Sturgeon County within Alberta's Industrial Heartland Industrialized Planning Zone. The objective was to hear perspectives, distinguish verified information from unanswered questions, and capture matters requiring follow-up.

Presentations were provided by Mark Plamondon, Executive Director, AIHA, and Kent McMullin, Senior Investment Attraction Officer, Sturgeon County. The supplied discussion summary does not include detailed presentation minutes.

Discussion Format

Four facilitated tables ran over two rounds. Public members rotated between Sturgeon County and AIHA tables; industry participants rotated between two NCIA-facilitated discussions focused on technical questions and trust. Questions that could not be answered during the meeting were collected for proposed follow-up.

Discussion Summary and Key Takeaways

These notes reflect participants' questions, observations and discussion themes, not necessarily consensus or verified facts. Statements about projects, costs, schedules and regulatory responsibilities should be read as discussion content unless independently confirmed.

Trust Table: What Builds Trust (Industry Participants)

What has your organization done over the years to build trust with residents near your site, and what's worked best?

Participants pointed to sustained community investment and support, showing up face-to-face at events, building relationships out in the community, and staying visible, including through forums like this one and through NR CAER. They described deliberate, transparent communication as part of that work, and noted that success is genuinely hard to measure.

- Takeaway: trust is built through sustained, visible presence and transparency over time, not any single program, and participants were candid that they can't easily point to a metric that proves it's working.

What are your organization's current priorities when it comes to community engagement and support?

Priorities named included reconciliation, poverty reduction, and support for foodbanks and local organizations, often in partnership with others (Man Van, United Way, Boys & Girls Club) to direct support where it's needed most. Getting employees personally involved in the community was also raised. Participants noted engagement levels shift over time and that smaller companies work with smaller budgets.

- Takeaway: investment is increasingly collaborative across companies rather than each company running its own separate program, and scales to what each organization can sustain.

How do engagement expectations compare across regulators, the municipality, and the public? Where do you feel the most pressure, or the most room to do well?

Participants said community expectations scale with project size: a bigger project brings bigger "asks" for things like road funding or local projects. They distinguished "consultation" from "engagement" as carrying different expectations and pointed to the value of building relationships among industry neighbours directly (since they're not competing with one other), including through existing regulatory reporting like annual and emissions reports.

- Takeaway: public expectations scale with how visible and large a project is, and industry already operates under layered regulatory and peer-collaboration obligations that most residents don't see.

With so much industrial development in the news across the Heartland lately, is there anything you're noticing about how trust is landing with residents right now, or anything you're thinking about doing differently?

Participants asked directly what Meta itself is doing for community involvement, and whether there's an expectation they'll show up the way established industry has. They stressed the importance of being a good industry neighbour, and noted residents don't really distinguish between companies: when one organization has an issue, it reflects on everyone in the Heartland. They were candid that data centres are a different kind of industry than what residents are used to, and that broader public unease about where AI is going makes trust-building a harder climb for Meta specifically than for industry people already know and accept.

- Takeaway: trust in new and established industry is interdependent, and data centres face a steeper trust climb because they're unfamiliar to residents, not because of anything specific that's gone wrong.

Community & Technical Table: Themes and Concerns

This table covered a wider range of ground: industry collaboration, infrastructure, emergency management, workforce, the data centre project itself, Indigenous consultation, resource use, and data governance. Each theme below is summarized from the discussion, with the specific questions raised listed underneath.

Industry Collaboration and Good Neighbour Practice

Participants noted that a proactive, collaborative approach between operators and the public is the norm in the Heartland and questioned whether that approach was followed here. They contrasted Meta, as a new and unfamiliar entrant, with industry neighbours who have operated in the region for 60-plus years and built trust through an established track record and protocol.

- Has Meta sat down directly with industry neighbours to discuss shared issues such as traffic, noise, and quality of life?
- Why hasn't the same proactive, collaborative approach used elsewhere in the Heartland been visible on this project?
- With established industry trusted in part because of decades of track record, how does Meta intend to establish itself as a good industry neighbour?
- Takeaway: this is the same trust-climb dynamic raised at the industry table (Part 1), heard independently from the community side: Meta is being measured against a bar of established relationships it hasn't had time to build yet.

Quality of Life and Infrastructure

Residents opened by asking, in general terms, whether quality of life in the region will change for the better or worse as this development proceeds. More specifically, they raised concern that rapid industrial expansion is affecting quality of life and infrastructure, citing increased traffic congestion and heavy construction traffic (referencing IPL, Dow, and NWR projects) that has caused fatalities and accelerated road wear. The table host (AIHA) noted Alberta tends to follow a "growth funds growth" approach, where infrastructure improvements often lag years behind the economic activity that prompts them.

- How can multiple companies collaborate to manage workforce traffic (construction workers, bus fleets) more effectively?
- What best practices can reduce "pinch points" during peak construction periods?
- How is traffic being managed given the concentration of existing industry and projects underway, such as Dow Path2Zero?
- Are dangerous goods routes in place, and is the County prepared to respond to an incident involving trucks transporting dangerous goods?
- There's a perceived disconnect between economic development goals and infrastructure management split between Alberta Transportation and local counties.

- Jurisdictional confusion between provincial secondary highways and county-managed roads complicates service delivery, such as snow clearing.
- Is a master traffic plan being developed to deconflict construction turnarounds and worker traffic, given the Highway 643 signal issues already experienced in the area?
- How are industry neighbours being consulted on traffic planning for this project specifically?
- Takeaway: infrastructure capacity is seen as lagging visible growth, and residents don't have a clear picture of who, County or Province, is responsible for what.

Emergency Management and Protective Services

Participants raised how emergency response and protective services fit around a facility of this kind, including whether specialized fire planning is required and how data centre operations integrate with existing regional emergency management structures.

- Is a special fire plan required for the data centre, given the nature of the facility?
- What emergency management and hazards plan applies to the site, and who is responsible for maintaining it?
- How does the facility fit into existing regional emergency response coordination, such as the Heartland Mutual Aid Organization?
- Takeaway: residents want to see data centre operations folded into the region's existing emergency response framework, not treated as a standalone risk nobody has mapped yet.

Workforce and Economic Growth

The Heartland currently has $30–35 billion in active capital investment; counting external projects like LNG Canada and the proposed $20 billion Pacific Link Pipeline, total regional investment could reach roughly $80 billion. Participants expect this to tighten the skilled trades labour market and push wages up, while also agreeing it drives a stronger local economy as people move to the region for work, with tax revenue funding other community jobs (firefighters, County staff). Immigration and healthcare policy were discussed as speculative factors unlikely to materially affect worker migration, since people move to where the jobs are.

- Is there a strategy to ensure enough skilled trades and engineers are available as investment accelerates?
- What are the projected effects on the labour market from these expansions?
- Are there projected impacts on workers or labour tied to the October 19th referendum?
- Will skilled tradespeople need extra training or certification when they arrive in Alberta?
- Is more granular, monthly headcount data available from companies to help plan for traffic and local pressures?
- Could aggregate company headcount data be compiled to show peak hiring periods (for example, as a shared infographic)?
- When is the regional labour force expected to peak? (Dow is projected to reach about 6,000 workers around this time next year; the broader wave of regional capital activity is projected to peak between Q4 2027 and 2028.)
- Is Meta coordinating with regional trades-training partners (named in discussion: NAIT, MacEwan, PCL, and Stantec) on workforce training for this scale of construction?
- Is there an opportunity to build apprenticeship programs into Sturgeon County high schools around this project?
- Takeaway: growth is seen as a genuine opportunity, but the appetite is for more specific, shared workforce data, and a direct line into trades training and apprenticeships, so the region can plan ahead of the pinch points rather than react to them.

Data Centre Development and Community Impacts

Discussion covered the project's energy needs, regulatory oversight, and community impacts. Participants noted data centres are being sited in zoned industrial areas specifically to avoid the community friction older facility types caused near residential areas, and that data centres themselves are generally governed by standard municipal development permits (setbacks, height, aesthetics, noise), while the larger energy facility is separately regulated by environmental and energy authorities. A recurring theme was that residents feel they have little influence over “permitted use” approvals until a high-profile company draws public attention to a project already working within that framework.

- Who has the authority to shut down the data centre if it isn't following bylaws or regulations, and who holds it accountable?
- Are other data centres being built elsewhere in Canada, or only in Alberta?

- Is clean energy being explored to help power data centres?
- Has nuclear power been considered to help meet Meta's power needs? If it was considered and set aside, why?
- Is there a plan for disposing of electronic equipment once these facilities are eventually decommissioned?
- Are there any benefit agreements in place, and if so, what do they include?
- Why is Meta's community investment program limited to Sturgeon County rather than the whole Industrial Heartland region?
- Do any of the five Industrial Heartland municipalities have, or are they considering, a requirement that a share of major project investment support local social services and non-profits?
- Can Meta provide more detail on how much funding is planned for community investment?
- Can Meta speak to its development permit and grading permit process, and is there a master site development plan the public can access?
- If the facility needs major upgrades in 3–5 years, what happens to it, what would upgrade costs look like, and who is responsible for them?
- Since the grant program is structured to benefit Sturgeon County, is there a way to ensure it reaches the specific schools and students most directly impacted, not just school divisions generally?
- Takeaway: the "permitted use" process is a fairness and process concern as much as a Meta-specific one: residents feel shut out of decisions until a high-profile project makes the existing process visible, and that same ask for transparency extends to permitting, site planning, and the facility's long-term future.

Indigenous Consultation and Procurement

Participants asked how duty-to-consult obligations with Indigenous communities have been met for this project and drew a direct comparison to how Beacon has approached Indigenous procurement on its own work.

- What duty-to-consult process took place with Indigenous communities, and how is that relationship being managed going forward?
- Has Meta engaged an Indigenous-owned firm for procurement, similar to Beacon's approach, and if so, what does that partnership look like?
- Does AUC licensing provide any assurance that Indigenous engagement commitments are being met, and can that be made visible to the public?
- Takeaway: participants are using Beacon's Indigenous procurement relationship as the comparison point and want to see Meta's own commitments made just as concrete and visible.

Resource Management, Regional Impact, and Public Communication

Discussion turned to where the facility's natural gas would be sourced (including whether it would flow through infrastructure like the Alliance pipeline), whether facility-specific emissions data would be published, and how water use would be managed. Current Heartland water consumption was clarified as roughly 0.6% of river flow, with an expectation that residents' needs take priority in a shortage. Participants emphasized a need for clear, proactive communication about resource use and regulatory oversight to get ahead of misinformation.

- Will there be a specific breakdown of greenhouse gas emissions from these facilities?
- Where exactly will the natural gas for facilities like Greenlight be sourced?
- Will new companies entering the region, including those tied to data centre projects, be expected to join NCIA to keep public engagement and environmental management consistent?
- How will this affect the availability of materials, parts, and steel in the region, particularly for power generation?
- Who is responsible for monitoring noise and stormwater runoff and drainage from the site, and who ensures those rules are being followed?
- As funding flows into the area, how will it be allocated across municipal, provincial, and regional levels, and will the province claw back any of Sturgeon County's tax base growth?
- Is there a community needs assessment behind the $6 million grant program, and what's the strategy for how that money gets allocated?
- What level of emissions should the area expect from Beacon's temporary power generation (referenced in discussion as "5 generators per 40 trailers"), and what does that mean for local air quality?

- Takeaway: the ask here is for specific, facility-level disclosure, actual emissions figures, actual sourcing, actual allocation formulas, rather than general reassurance, and that extends to who is monitoring compliance once the facility is operating.

Data Security, Consumption, and Governance

Participants discussed the security and governance implications of large-scale data storage by US-based companies, referencing the US CLOUD Act and concerns about US jurisdiction, control over Canadians' personal information, and security risks (hacking, bad actors, the dark web). It was noted that American companies must still comply with Canadian privacy law, though security risk doesn't disappear because of that. Participants also asked whether residents or regional stakeholders have any real voice in shaping international AI and data governance standards, regional advocates acknowledged they currently lack the expertise or standing to influence those broader policy decisions directly.

- Why was Meta selected to build a centre here rather than a Canadian company?
- There was a data centre event the same evening in Calgary: was Meta involved, and if so, why weren't they here in the Heartland instead?
- Can changes to US data and data-security policy affect Canadians here, given an American company operates the facility?
- What's the actual distinction between AI, data, data centres, and “AI data centres”? Confusion between these terms is feeding fear, and a clear explanation would help.
- Takeaway: data sovereignty concerns are layered with a genuine public information gap about what AI and data centres are, and that gap is doing as much work to fuel anxiety as any specific risk.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Trust is comparative

Both public and industry participants compared Meta with established Heartland operators whose community relationships have developed over decades. Familiarity and visible engagement were recurring expectations.

Jurisdiction and accountability need clarification

Questions crossed municipal, provincial, regulatory and international responsibilities, including roads, permits, emergency planning and data governance.

Infrastructure and services are seen as lagging growth

Traffic, workforce availability and public services were recurring concerns alongside significant new investment.

Specific information is preferred to general reassurance

Participants sought facility-level emissions information, community investment amounts, construction workforce data and project timelines.

Proactive communication is a priority

Participants identified a need for accessible explanations of AI and data centres, clear project information, and visible community engagement.

Wrap Up, Follow-Up and Next Meeting

As outlined in the agenda, questions collected at each table will be compiled and directed to organizations best positioned to respond, as determined by LITH partner agencies. The included materials and remarks do not confirm final priorities, formal assignments, completed responses or motions.

Next meeting: February 2027 (exact date to be confirmed).

Adjournment: 8:02 PM;