PREDA Regional Airport Management Meeting

October 23, 2026 10 am to 12 pm Sandman Hotel Grande Prairie Alberta

In attendance:

Name	Municipality	Airport
Kelsie Fournier	MD Smoky River	Smoky River
Norman Brolette		
Gilles Roy	PREDA Executive	
Michael G	CAO Village Berwyn	
Brian Carreau	PREDA Executive	
Keir Gervais	CAO Town of Spirit River	Spirit River
Tammy Yaremko	Mayor Town of Spirit River	Spirit River
Donna Buchinski	PREDA Executive	Smoky River
Sandra Eastman	PREDA Executive	
Terry Ungarian	Northern Lights County	Manning
Myrna Lanctot	Mayor Village Donnelly	Smoky River
Charles Schwab	County of Northern Lights	Manning Airport Manager
Phil Kolodychuk	Reeve MD Fairview	Fairview
Ken Wittig	Town of Valleyview councillor	Valleyview
Kimball Newberry	MD Opportunity	Wabasca
Mike Wolfe	MD Opportunity	Red Earth
Will Stewart	Global Airport Training Services	Facilitator
Mary Joan Aylward	PREDA	
Dan Dibbelt	PREDA	

NOTES

Background

Introductions and overview of project. Started in 2022 when AHS announced fixed wing medivac would cease in four, potentially 18, rural airports. PREDA advocated for a return to service, and it was resumed. However, this enlighten municipalities how tenuous this service was. Two reports were completed by PREDA, *Regional and Community Airports*, and *Regional Airport Management Study*. The meeting was called to assess municipal interest in pursuing some form of regional management.

Both Peace River and Beaverlodge Airports are independently owned. None of the Peace Region Airports have scheduled service. Only the Manning and Peace River Airports have a designated airport manager.

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Discussion

Municipalities, mostly, manage their airports between administration staff and public works. Most airports lose money. Most municipalities lack airport expertise.

Tracking flights to collect landing fees is a challenge. MD of Smoky utilises Flight Aware, https://www.flightaware.com/. Cost is $110 US per month and pays for itself. Most airports are utilised by fixed wing medivac.

Will Stewart presented a regional model that would see one manager for all subscribed airports. The service would provide all management services including grant applications, site inspections to ensure compliance, hanger/land leases, and assistance in dealing with AHS, forestry etc. With 12 member airports the cost would be around $29,000 each annually.

Discussion revolved around codified management models, concern around long term commitments and adequate site visits. Most of those present wanted to take information back to their municipalities for further consideration and wanted to see an additional meeting to discuss further.

PREDA has agreed to host another meeting during the PREDA/NTAB meeting December 3 and 4th in Fairview. That meeting to be open to all municipalities and council members. Administration.

Further discussion was held on two advocacy issues:

1. Airport funding: The province has provided funding to other airports including a total of $36 million to Red Deer. If using STIP funding for airports it may lower the available dollars for a municipality to complete other infrastructure within their municipality. The cost of running an airport is expensive. PREDA and its members to advocate for a separate pool of provincial dollars to assist with capital needs for airports.
2. Subsidized Commercial flights. Recently the province has suggested subsidizing flights in Medicine Hat and Lethbridge to attract carriers. Similar funding should also be available to northern airports.

Meeting ended at 12:30pm.

Airport funding

AI Overview

The Government of Alberta has provided major provincial funding to the Red Deer Regional Airport (YQF) through two primary grants: [1]

- **$30 Million Provincial Grant (2023–2024 / Phase 3 Expansion):** Announced as part of the provincial budget and partnered with Red Deer County and the City of Red Deer, this $30 million fund supports Phase 3 of the airport's multi-year expansion. Key projects include extending Taxiway Alpha, utility installations, enhanced road access along Airport Drive (connecting Highway 2A and Township Road 374), civil works (water sanitation, stormworks, fibre optics), and emergency access for the hamlet of Springbrook. [1, 2, 3]
- **$7.5 Million Provincial Grant (2022):** Provided earlier to fund runway and infrastructure rehabilitation—including widening Runway 17/35 from 100 to 150 feet (46 meters), upgrading Taxiway Bravo and Apron 1, and supporting terminal design work to handle larger aircraft like Boeing 737s

Medicine Hat News

OCTOBER 21ST, 2026

Province mulls subsidy options to attract regional air service

BY ZOE MASON ON AUGUST 12, 2026.

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Alberta Transportation Minister Devin Dreeshen speaks to media in Calgary in this May 2022 file photo.--cp file photo

zmason@medicinehatnews.com

Minister of Transportation Devin Dreeshen said the province is considering using government subsidies to help attract a new provider for regional air service in southern Alberta.

The province launched a request for expressions of interest in June, which asked regional air carriers and aviation operators for information regarding potential route opportunities, service models, funding considerations and feasibility.

The request closed to submissions on July 6.

“If I had a magic wand, I’d love to be able to see different providers being interested in having additional passenger service out of Medicine Hat and other regional airports across the province. That’s the work we’re undertaking right now, to figure out how best to do that,” Dreeshen said at a roundtable Tuesday.

In 2024, Premier Danielle Smith raised the possibility of the province covering some of the initial losses of airlines that agree to expand service to regional airports during an appearance at a Chamber of Commerce event in the Hat.

Dreeshen says the province is still considering that option, which is already practised in jurisdictions like Saskatchewan.

“When you look at Saskatchewan, they have a model where the provincial government subsidizes a certain number of seats per route that they choose to make sure you can maintain that level of service. If you have enough passengers, that subsidy never kicks in. But if you don’t, then at least the provider knows they’re not going to lose their shirts being able to have that service,” said Dreeshen.

“That’s something we’re looking at as an option.”

For the time being, he said his ministry is focused on identifying possible providers. Dreeshen says the province is also paying special attention to providers that can offer both passenger and cargo services.

“To see those economic benefits of being able to do cargo flights as well as passenger flights is something that we’re looking at,” he said.

Dreeshen also responded to questions about his ministry’s efforts to crack down on enforcement for commercial trucking safety.

Since October, the Alberta government has issued 443 administrative penalties and eliminated 20 unsafe carriers from Alberta's roads. Since April 2025, the ministry has also shut down five fraudulent Class 1 trucking schools.

One of the 20 carriers that has had Alberta operations terminated is Conquer Transportation – the company whose truck was responsible for the fatal crash in Brandon in May.

The carrier was previously registered in Manitoba before having its safety permit revoked in 2021. The company later registered in Alberta.

"Provinces being able to share data amongst themselves is something that we've been advocating for quite some time, because they does help on these chameleon carrier-type folks that can pop up in every other province," said Dreeshen.

He also says his ministry is advocating for implementing new certifications for the trucking industry, including possible inclusion within the Red Seal interprovincial trade standards system.

"That's something that's in the advanced education world right now, being able to design what the curriculum would look like for a Red Seal certification. So a ticket, similar to being an electrician, to be able to have a certain set of criteria in training up to the trucking industry to so you're having that type of professionalism."

Dreeshen says that idea would require five other provinces to sign on.

The minister also provided a brief update on the Highway 3 twinning project. The section between Taber and Burdett, the first of eight sectors, was recently completed. The section spanning Medicine Hat to Whitla remains in the design stage.

"The other sections are all in varying stages, whether it's design or engineering, to make sure they can get the construction dollars to complete it all the way from Medicine Hat to the B.C. border," said Dreeshen.

He says conversations are underway with his counterparts in the British Columbia government to try to extend twinning on the other side of the border to avoid a bottleneck at Crowsnest Pass.

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Regional Airport Management

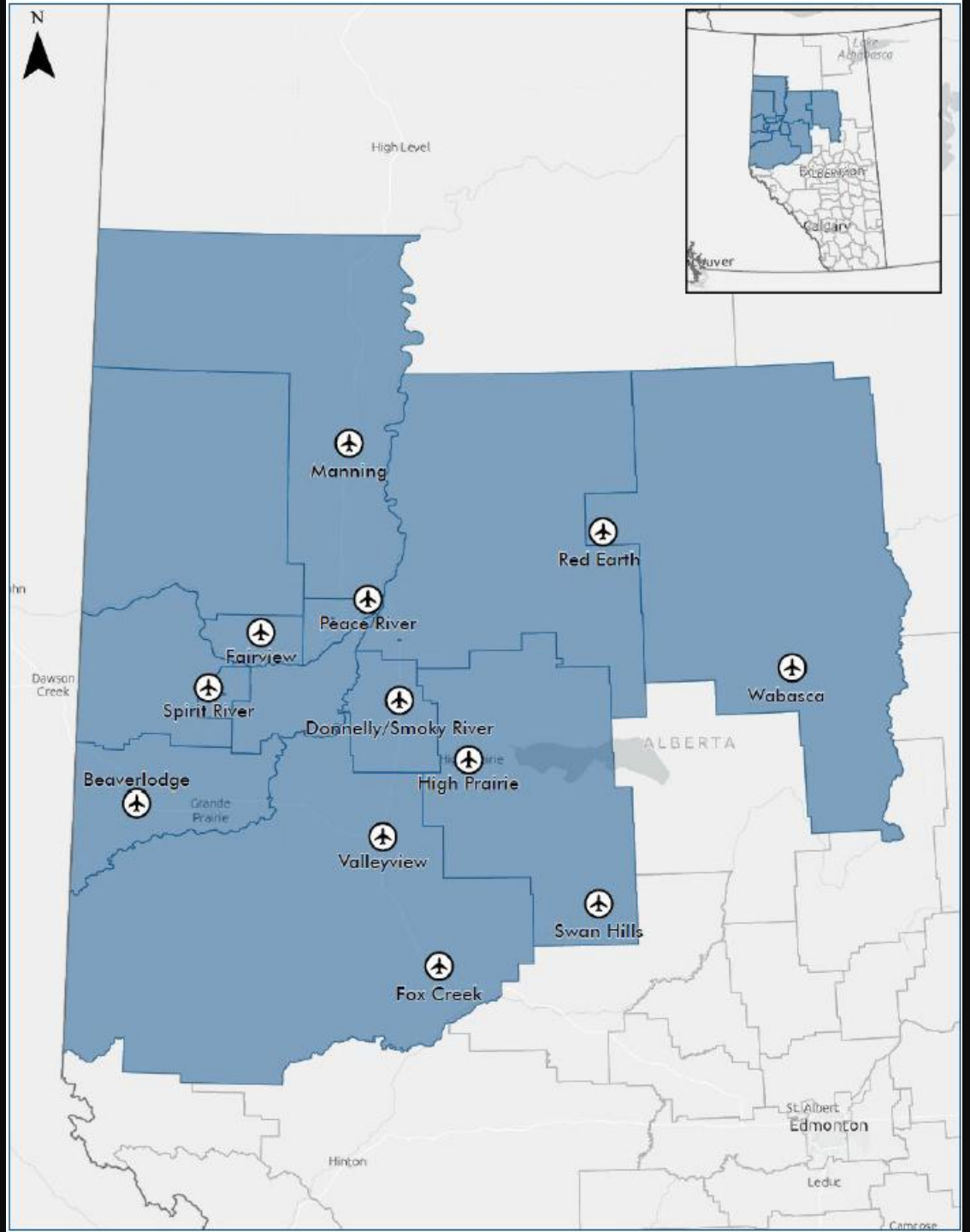
Study & Business Case

Objectives

1. Evaluate existing administrative and operational models at each Peace Region airport
2. Identify and preliminarily assess high-level options for regional management, drawing on supporting examples from similar Canadian contexts
3. Select a preferred option and develop a detailed cost-benefit analysis and business case, including implementation strategies, and projected contributions from stakeholders.

12 Community Airports in the Peace Region

- Beaverlodge Airport
- Fairview Municipal Airport
- Fox Creek Airport
- High Prairie Airport
- Manning Municipal Airport
- Peace River Regional Airport
- Red Earth Creek Airport
- Smoky River Regional Airport
- Spirit River Airport
- Swan Hills Airport
- Valleyview Airport
- Wabasca Airport


N
High Level
Manning
Red Earth
Peace River
Fairview
Dawson Creek
Spirit River
Donnelly/Smoky River
Wabasca
ALBERTA
Beaverlodge
Grande Prairie
High Prairie
Valleyview
Swan Hills
Fox Creek
St. Albert
Edmonton
Hinton
Leduc
Camrose
Lake Athabasca
Calgary

Existing Conditions

- 10 out of 12 airports report not being financially self-sustaining, demonstrating a systemic funding gap across the network where operational costs exceed revenue, requiring municipal or external subsidies
- Reported deficits range from $7,000 per annum to $177,000
- Operating expenses are increasing annually, typically by 1% to 5%

Administrative Models

Current:

- Municipal Direct Operations
- Contracted Management (Single Airport)
- Not-for-Profit Airport Authority Management

To Be Explored:

- Contracted Management
  (Hybrid Management of Multiple Airports)

Current Administrative Models Highlighted Challenges

- Lack of aviation expertise
- Political and budget volatility
- Operational inefficiencies
- Missed economies of scale
- Cost

What is Multiple Airport Contracted Management?

- One Airport Manager shared amongst many airports
- Operations staff remain town/county employees
- Airport Manager responsible for:
  - Aerodrome standards and best practices
  - Strategic oversight
  - Administrative support
  - Income opportunities
  - Stakeholder engagement
  - Training and capacity building
  - Emergency response

Multiple Airport Contracted Management Advantages

- Aviation experience
- Political transition resilience
- Operationally efficient
- Economies of scale
- Shared cost
- Affordable dedicated airport professional

Multiple Airport Contracted Management Challenges

- Limited physical presence
- Weaker community relationships
- Community resistance
- Initial set up challenges



Cost to Airport Operators

The Million Dollar Question

Cost to Airport Operators

- Proposed equal shares across all members regardless of airport size or operation complexity.
- Ensures a clear contribution annually
- Ensures equal access to resources regardless of size

Cost to Airport Operators

Assuming 12 members:

Estimated $29,000.00 annually

Per Member

Total estimated annual program cost:

$350,000.00



Timeline:
Establishment, Oversight & Governance

Establish Program Members → Establish Oversight Committee → Request & Evaluate Proposals → Implementation of Regional Airport Manager

Timeline:
Establishment, Oversight & Governance





Who’s Onboard?

Questions?

