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New Poll: Supermajority of Albertans want oil and gas companies to cover costs of well cleanup, unpaid municipal taxes and landowner rents

“Albertans don’t agree on a lot these days,” says pollster Janet Brown, “but our research shows they overwhelmingly want the oil and gas industry to pay their bills.”

(Edmonton, AB) – New Alberta polling shows an overwhelming public consensus that oil and gas companies should pay to clean-up their wells, and super-majority support for the government holding industry – as a whole – accountable for companies’ unpaid property taxes to municipalities, and unpaid rents to landowners. Highlights include:

- 92% support oil and gas companies being responsible for the final clean-up of wells
- 87% support the government requiring industry to cover unpaid property taxes to municipalities
- 84% support the government requiring industry to cover unpaid rents to landowners

The research was released as the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) gathers for their fall convention in Edmonton this week. The RMA’s most recent data show rural communities are owed over \$250 million in unpaid taxes from oil and gas companies – with the number rising every year. “Rural Albertans are paying the price for these unpaid oil and gas taxes, through service cuts and increased costs,” says **Ponoka County Reeve Paul McLauchlin**. “This polling tells me they’ve had enough, and it’s a full rejection of the government’s inaction to date on this topic.”

This new polling comes in the midst of rising public outrage over the provincial government’s *Mature Asset Strategy* (MAS), [a plan](#) that will weaken industry accountability for oilfield cleanup, water down reclamation standards, and push even more costs onto the Alberta taxpayer.

“This matches what we’ve been hearing at [Clean Up Your Mess town halls across the province](#): that industry is making record profits, and they must pay what they owe now – not just for well cleanup, but for the unpaid bills left behind by operators who have dined and dashed on their commitments to landowners and municipalities.” says **Phillip Meintzer, campaign organizer with the Coalition for Responsible Energy (C4RE)**.

One of those people is **Dale Braun, a landowner from Edmonton** with three wells on his property owned by MAGA Energy, an operational oil and gas company that has not paid annual compensation for the loss of the use of his land for the last two years; the company now owes

Braun around \$24,000. “Like most Albertans, I pay my taxes. I pay my bills. I clean up my own damn mess. It’s the law. Why should they have a different set of rules?”

“Landowners’ frustration with industry is reaching a boiling point,” says **Alberta Surface Rights Federation President Bill Heidecker**. “Unless these issues are addressed, there can be no consideration of increased production, no new pipelines, or carbon capture and storage. It makes no sense.”

The polling was conducted by trusted industry leader **Janet Brown Opinion Research**, an Alberta-based company specializing in public opinion polling and market research.

Brown highlighted that even though the unpaid property taxes and landowner compensation largely impact rural communities, it’s noteworthy that support for industry accountability is consistently high across the province: **“These findings show that these aren’t just rural concerns. People across Alberta agree that industry should be held responsible for these costs.”**

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BACKGROUND:

- Across Alberta, there are more than 300,000 wells, 450,000 kilometres of pipeline, and around 40,000 facilities that have yet to be cleaned up after nearly a century of energy development, with cleanup costs estimated to be between \$60 billion and \$130 billion.
- At the same time, oil and gas companies are increasingly reneging on their municipal tax bills: the Rural Municipalities of Alberta says [rural communities are owed](#) \$254 million in unpaid taxes from oil and gas companies, many of them [still solvent](#). This is leading to municipalities cutting services, or raising taxes on everyone else to make up the difference.
- [MAGA Energy](#) is one of many companies refusing to pay their annual compensation (or rent) to landowners. Landowners are entitled to seek compensation from the Alberta government when companies renege on payments, which means taxpayers ultimately foot the bill. [Since 2010](#), Alberta taxpayers have covered nearly \$150 million in unpaid rent to landowners – \$30 million in 2024 alone.

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