



2005
BUDGET
Investing in the Next Alberta

2005 - 06 Quarterly Budget Report

Q1 ACTIVITY REPORT

August 2005

Updating Albertans

In 2004, the government introduced its 20-year strategic plan to build on the province's strong fiscal and economic environment and create more opportunities for Albertans and Alberta businesses to succeed. *Today's Opportunities, Tomorrow's Promise* is the action plan that will help the government achieve its vision of: "A vibrant and prosperous province where Albertans enjoy a superior quality of life and are confident about the future for themselves and their children." The strategic plan is based on four pillars.

- **Unleashing innovation** focuses on becoming a world leader in innovation, research, development and commercialization of new ideas.
- **Leading in learning** requires making sure Albertans have the opportunities they need to learn, adapt and develop new knowledge and new skills.
- **Competing in a global marketplace** is about creating a business and investment environment that is recognized around the world as an excellent place to do business.
- **Making Alberta the best place to live, work and visit** means attracting people to come live in Alberta because it provides an environment in which they can contribute their talents and create a quality of life that meets their dreams.

The purpose of this quarterly activity report is to show Albertans what activities the government undertook in support of this vision. The following pages include some of those activities from each of the government departments.

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LISTENING TO ALBERTANS

The activities that support Alberta's vision are often influenced by the input the government receives from Albertans. Through public consultations, surveys, letters, phone calls, and e-mails, Albertans tell government what's important to them and what concerns them. In the first quarter, Albertans had a say as government:

- **announced** a comprehensive review of the province's advanced learning system. Called *A Learning Alberta: Framing the Challenge*, the review will look at all aspects of Alberta's adult learning system, including current funding, tuition and affordability, rural education, innovative approaches to learning, and roles and responsibilities. (Advanced Education)
- **conducted** Minister's Industry Consultation with representatives from 35 producer groups to discuss proposed changes to the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization program. (Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, AFRD)
- **conducted** an online consultation to allow Albertans to provide input on the future direction of early childhood development and child care programs. The province will use the input to develop future policy and programs, and guide possible future investments under the proposed national child care initiative. (Children's Services)
- **hosted** 1,156 volunteers and volunteer leaders from across Alberta in Calgary for the annual Vitalize Provincial Voluntary Sector conference. The conference strengthens the volunteer network in Alberta and furthers its development. (Community Development)
- **consulted** with stakeholders, as part of a review of the retail electricity market, on how to structure regulated electricity rates. Based on feedback received from stakeholders, the government developed policy on the New Regulated Rate Option that balances the needs of the entire market, including the interests of consumers. (Energy)
- **redesigned** the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) website, which includes a new Public Zone section with information about energy resource development for a non-technical audience. The addition of the Public Zone section was in response to Albertans identifying a need for information on energy resource development. Current sections include information on sour gas and public safety. Future sections will include oil and gas, oil sands, coal, electricity, and EUB processes. (Energy and Utilities Board, EUB)
- **began** the review of the current Natural Gas Rebate Program, which is set to expire at the end of 2005-06. The review is examining the current program's effectiveness and will determine whether it should continue, or if a new approach should be taken. (Energy)
- **commenced** Phase I of Alberta Environment's Routine Disclosure Initiative. This initiative is part of the government's commitment to openness and transparency in protecting and managing Alberta's environment and making sure partners, clients and stakeholders have access to information they need for effective environmental management. (Environment)
- **reported** consumer input at public meetings held by the Automobile Insurance Rate Board. The board annually considers input from the public and industry stakeholders when setting auto insurance premiums. (Finance)

- **announced** a minimum six per cent reduction on mandatory automobile insurance premiums, which became effective July 1, 2005. The reduction saves drivers more than \$70 million and puts premiums 11 per cent below the frozen 2003 level. (Finance)
- **held** 10 focus groups throughout the province during June 2005 as part of the ongoing review of the *Local Authorities Election Act*. (Municipal Affairs)
- **handled** 13,000 phone calls and some 4,300 e-mail questions and comments through the Alberta Connects service, which allows Albertans to ask questions and provide feedback on any government program or service. Currently, 96 per cent of all e-mail questions sent to Alberta Connects are answered within 72 hours. (Public Affairs Bureau)
- **gathered** stakeholder and public input for the *Blind Persons Rights Act*. This included discussions on new identity cards for blind Albertans and their guide dogs, standards for guide dogs and changes to penalties for limiting access to public services and facilities. (Seniors and Community Supports)
- **held** 25 meetings with Albertans across the province on how the Natural Resources Conservation Board regulates Alberta's confined feeding industry. (Sustainable Resource Development, SRD)
- **invited** Albertans to comment on proposed changes to the current policy governing forest management planning in Alberta. (SRD)

UNLEASHING INNOVATION/COMPETING IN A GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

Albertans are pioneers - known for innovative thinking and a "can do" attitude. It's this spirit that makes Alberta a leader on so many fronts. Focusing on research, technology and innovation will allow Albertans to maximize traditional industries, and broaden Alberta's economy. Low taxes and looking at untapped markets to export and promote our goods, services, knowledge and technology play a vital part in being recognized as an excellent place to do business. Making Alberta's infrastructure the best in world is also important, so citizens and businesses have the foundation needed to compete. In the first quarter, the government:

- **co-hosted** the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development conference on e-learning, which brought together experts from around the world to share ideas and best practices on e-learning and distance education. (Advanced Education)
- **supported** Alberta's diversified livestock industry, including sheep, goat, deer, elk, reindeer and bison, with \$2 million in industry-driven marketing assistance to grow domestic and foreign markets. (AFRD)
- **approved** a \$2-million Beef Product and Market Development Loan and a \$1.8-million Project Investor Financing Loan for a federally inspected, European Union-compliant meat packing facility to process cattle, bison and elk. (AFRD)
- **fast-tracked** payment processing of the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization program. Almost \$182 million was paid during this quarter for the 2003, 2004 and 2005 program years. Since program inception, approximately \$628 million has been injected into Alberta's agriculture industry. (AFRD)
- **increased** grant amounts available to Alberta's film industry to \$1.5 million from \$750,000 for each production partnering with an Alberta company. The increase is intended to help grow Alberta-owned film industry and attract movie-makers from around the world. (Community Development)
- **sponsored** the *Implement and Sustain Lean Thinking Everywhere Conference* in Edmonton from June 6-10, 2005, in collaboration with the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, and the Association of Manufacturing Excellence. Over 600 participants from companies across Canada and the United States were informed about and exposed to lean manufacturing practices to improve productivity, profitability and competitiveness. (Economic Development)
- **converted** Alberta's five per cent hotel room tax to the new four per cent tourism levy. The annual level of provincial support for tourism marketing and development will now be determined by the amount of revenue the levy raised in previous years. Effective April 1, 2005, this sustainable funding will allow Alberta to expand and enhance marketing programs and is intended to restore Alberta's competitiveness as a preferred Canadian travel destination. (Economic Development, Finance)
- **announced** the establishment of the Aboriginal Tourism Advisory Council. The council includes 10 members representing First Nation and Métis communities throughout Alberta, along with representatives from Economic Development, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, and Travel Alberta. It will provide guidance on ways to grow Alberta's aboriginal tourism industry. (Economic Development, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)

- **raised** awareness about Alberta's energy investment opportunities and the ongoing BSE situation with the U.S. government, business community and media. Premier Ralph Klein participated in the Western Governors' Association annual meeting in Colorado where he raised issues with high-ranking members of the U.S. Administration, and travelled to New York to market Alberta as a secure energy supplier and strong investment opportunity to Wall Street investors, analysts and business media. (Economic Development, International and Intergovernmental Relations).
- **initiated** a major videoconferencing research project in five school jurisdictions in Alberta. Athabasca University, in partnership with the University of Lethbridge and Galileo Educational network, will examine both technical and teaching considerations to maximize the effective use of videoconferencing as a classroom resource. (Education)
- **signed** a Memorandum of Understanding with the Cervantes Institute, an agency of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to develop digital content for the Grade 4 Spanish language and culture course. This digital content can be used in classrooms, distance learning and in conjunction with emerging technology such as videoconferencing. (Education)
- **received** the first round of applications from industry for the Innovative Energy Technologies Program. The program is designed to develop innovation to increase oil, gas and in situ oilsands recoveries, provide positive economic benefits to the people of Alberta without causing harm to the environment and assist in finding solutions to achieve optimal co-production of bitumen and natural gas. (Energy)
- **initiated** a consultation with industry to review the royalty regimes under the Coal Royalty Regulation. (Energy)
- **prepared** a draft emission trading program in conjunction with stakeholders for nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide emissions from the electricity sector. The draft program is currently available for public comment. (Environment)
- **initiated** the Brownfield Redevelopment Grant Pilot Program in cooperation with the City of Edmonton. The program is intended to provide an incentive to landowners to remediate soil/groundwater contamination and re-develop their properties. (Environment)
- **confirmed** Alberta's strong fiscal position with the release of the Government of Alberta 2004-05 Annual Report. Of the \$5-billion surplus, \$3.7 billion was allocated to the Debt Retirement Account for this purpose. At the start of the 2005-06 fiscal year, \$3.5 billion of accumulated debt was yet to mature and there was \$3.5 billion in the Debt Retirement Account. Bill 37, the *Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2005*, requires the government to lock in an equivalent amount of assets in the Debt Retirement Account, so that the assets can only be used to repay accumulated debt as it matures. (Finance)
- **worked** with other provinces and territories to improve securities regulation. A set of proposed amendments was released for public consultation on June 27, 2005. The proposed changes are intended to streamline access to capital markets across most of Canada. (Finance)
- **approved** the first cottage wine facility in Alberta - Bumbleberry Orchards (Fieldstone Fruit Wines) in Strathmore. New cottage wine regulations, announced in February 2005, enable companies to diversify, turning their fruit production businesses into wineries. (Gaming)
- **added** a new option to the Service Alberta website in partnership with the Alberta Registry Agents Association and the Alberta Motor Association. The new service allows Albertans to renew their Class 3 passenger vehicle registrations online. (Government Services)
- **developed** a partnership with the Office of the Utilities Consumer Advocate and consumer groups to intervene in electricity and/or natural gas rate hearings. The savings resulting from this intervention amount to \$11 million. (Government Services)
- **chaired** the annual Western Premiers' Conference in Lloydminster. Western Premiers agreed that addressing the priorities of major improvements in transportation infrastructure, trade, and training and post-secondary education are essential to maintaining and improving Canada's competitive position in international markets. (International and Intergovernmental Relations, IIR)
- **participated** in meetings of the Committee on Internal Trade in Quebec City. Progress was made on improvements to dispute settlement procedures, and the development of an energy chapter within the Agreement on Internal Trade. (IIR)

- **represented** Alberta's interests in softwood lumber dispute negotiations with the United States, at World Trade Organization meetings in Geneva, and in trade and investment negotiations with the European Union. (IIR)
- **committed** \$530 million for highway projects to the oil sands in and around Fort McMurray. (Infrastructure and Transportation)
- **committed** \$684 million for the province's highway network for 2005-06. The investment in both Highways 63 and 881 respond to growth pressures and future economic opportunities in northeast Alberta. These projects are to take place over the next 10 years. (Infrastructure and Transportation)
- **announced** \$6 million in Innovation Program funding for the Emergency Management Operation System. This two-year pilot project will implement a specially designed technology system that should better coordinate all levels of emergency response to major incidents. (Innovation and Science, Municipal Affairs)
- **joined** the newly established management board leading the Alberta Prion Science Initiative. The purpose of this \$38-million government initiative is to conduct research into prions, a type of protein found in humans and animals. When prions misfold, they have been linked to diseases such as BSE. (Innovation and Science)
- **signed** a Letter of Intent on Research and Development Cooperation between Gangwon Province, Korea and the Province of Alberta. This letter focuses on increased cooperation in the areas of: information and communications technology, biotechnology in agriculture, electronic medical appliances, advanced materials, personnel exchanges and joint research projects. The government committed \$50,000 for collaborative research projects with Korea. (Innovation and Science)
- **promoted** Alberta's biotechnology industry to an international audience at BIO 2005 in Philadelphia. This year, the Alberta Pavilion showcased services and products from companies and government agencies working in areas as diverse as therapeutic drugs for oncology and multiple sclerosis, plant-made pharmaceuticals, immunosuppressants, and biomaterials such as plastics and lubricants. (Innovation and Science)
- **announced** \$2 million to fund the Alberta Centre for Lipid Utilization. The centre will research and develop new ways of using fats and oils to create value-added products such as healthier foods, better cosmetics and renewable supplies for the creation of plastics, lubricants and glues. (Innovation and Science)
- **launched** a new service from the Alberta Queen's Printer to provide the public with the ability to receive electronic updates to Alberta legislation directly to their desktop. Users can subscribe to receive all legislative updates or only those updates to legislation of individual government ministries. The service was also provided to subscribers of QP Source Professional, the Queen's Printer professional legal research site. (Public Affairs Bureau)
- **completed** the procurement provision with the Government of British Columbia as part of the Alberta-British Columbia Bilateral Trade Enhancement Agreement for consideration at this fall's joint cabinet meeting. (Restructuring and Government Efficiency)
- **began** consultation with industry on a cross-government strategy for information and communications technology. The objective is to research and recommend a comprehensive, cost-effective approach to managing government's extensive and dynamic technology environment. (Restructuring and Government Efficiency)
- **hosted** the Third Interprovincial Shared Services Workshop for senior government executives in May. This workshop is an opportunity to discuss trends and opportunities in shared services for the public sector environment. (Restructuring and Government Efficiency)
- **completed** construction of Alberta SuperNet in 421 of 429 communities allowing Internet Service Providers to connected directly to SuperNet. This milestone means local service providers can buy bandwidth on the Alberta SuperNet and offer high-speed Internet and other commercial services to businesses and residences in SuperNet communities. Construction to the remaining eight communities continues. (Restructuring and Government Efficiency)
- **commenced** a four-month training program for four fire protection staff from Mexico as part of the information exchange under a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Jalisco, Mexico. (SRD)

LEADING IN LEARNING

Albertans know a solid education builds the foundation for a strong and prosperous society. Alberta's education system continues to be among the best in the world and staying at the forefront means providing students with the tools they need to achieve their potential.

Investments in universities, colleges and technical institutes are increasing, so they can provide high quality, affordable post-secondary education. This, in turn, creates opportunities for life-long learners to adapt their skills and develop new ones. A well-educated workforce is key to Alberta's continued economic success. In the first quarter, the government:

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- **provided** grant funding for the Treaty 7 Economic Development Corporation to host its annual Youth Entrepreneurial Camp. The camp provides opportunities for Aboriginal youth to gain employability skills through entrepreneurship. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, AAND)
 - **assisted** in the establishment of a Natural Resource Education Society for northeast Alberta. The Society will provide educational resources for teachers, support and deliver education programs, and work with libraries to become a leading resource for boreal education. (AAND)
 - **passed** Bill 1, *The Access to the Future Act*, which commits to a new \$3-billion Access to the Future endowment, a \$1-billion expansion of the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund, and a \$500-million expansion of the Ingenuity Fund. (Advanced Education)
 - **announced** that a \$25-million private donation to the University of Calgary's Engineering Department will be matched by the provincial government, creating a \$50-million boost for the university. (Advanced Education)
 - **increased** the funds available for the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) scholarships from \$50,000 to \$500,000 in 2005. (Advanced Education)
 - **created** the Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship Program, which will provide approximately \$3 million to 300 graduate students enrolled full-time in master or doctoral programs at designated Alberta universities in 2005-06. (Advanced Education)
 - **launched** a unique set of learning products showcasing apprenticeship programs and the trades for use in elementary and junior high schools. (Advanced Education)
 - **linked** established producers with young farmers through the Summer Farm Employment Program, providing youth the opportunity to gain experience and work full-time on a farm. (AFRD)
 - **hosted** the Uniting for Children 2005 Children's Forum. Over 1,000 parents, youth and service providers from all over Alberta came together to learn about issues relating to children, youth and families. (Children's Services)

- **held** 13 Travel Alberta industry marketing outlook workshops throughout Alberta. More than 500 tourism industry operators attended. Attendee satisfaction in terms of value was 99 per cent, and satisfaction with support of Travel Alberta's overall strategic direction and marketing plan was 96 per cent. (Economic Development)
- **supported** alternative learning through approval of 10 new outreach programs that keep at-risk students in school longer and help them attain their high school diplomas. (Education)
- **authorized** a new kindergarten to Grade 3 social studies program and provided more than \$18 million towards classroom resources and teacher professional development to support implementation. The new curriculum enhances the study of Canadian and Alberta history from many perspectives, including Canada's Aboriginal and francophone communities. (Education)
- **completed and launched** new textbooks to support Aboriginal Studies 10, 20 and 30 - infusing traditional teachings from an Aboriginal view, including "first hand" oral stories from different Aboriginal communities. (Education)
- **opened** a labour market information centre in Stettler, giving area residents access to the Internet, information about education programs, job search strategies, career and education planning techniques, and labour market trends and forecasts. (Human Resources and Employment, HRE)
- **co-ordinated** the placement of more than 3,600 students into summer jobs with more than 1,600 employers through the \$8-million Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP). STEP students gain valuable work experience in their area of study and employers benefit from the energy and enthusiasm students bring to their summer jobs. (HRE)
- **launched** *Sort It Out!* in partnership with Access TV and the City of Edmonton. *Sort It Out!* is a package of resources for Alberta students and educators about waste management, using the City of Edmonton as an example. More than 400 kits were mailed out across Alberta. (Environment)
- **allocated** \$577 million to build the Health Sciences Ambulatory Learning Centre in Edmonton, a world-class health and learning facility that will provide coordinated diagnostic and specialist services for patients as well as research and educational opportunities for University of Alberta health sciences students. (Infrastructure and Transportation)
- **signed** co-operative agreements with the Métis Nation and the Blood First Nation to enhance the Aboriginal Junior Forest Ranger Program in Alberta. The program teaches high school-aged youth about forest protection and natural resources. (SRD)

MAKING ALBERTA THE BEST PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT

Albertans' vision is one in which the province remains debt-free, with accessible, quality health care and education, safe and caring communities, and an environment that is preserved and protected. Alberta is a place that has something for everyone. The province is known for its spectacular scenery, rich cultural heritage and exciting history. Those attractions draw visitors from around the world and keep them coming back year after year. In the first quarter, the government:

Promoting Health and Wellness

- **provided** \$1.2 million to Alberta school jurisdictions to help them implement 30 minutes of daily physical activity for all students in Grades 1-9 starting in September 2005. The *Daily Physical Activity* initiative is further supported by classroom resources and funds for professional development opportunities and is the first part of an overall Wellness Framework being developed for Alberta schools. (Education)
- **hosted** the Alberta Health Symposium in Calgary to identify innovations that drive excellent health systems and healthier populations in other countries. Over 400 participants heard 28 speakers from nine different countries. (Health and Wellness)
- **launched** a hantavirus public awareness campaign to inform Albertans of the precautions they should take to avoid exposure to the virus. (Health and Wellness)
- **released** the 2005 West Nile Virus Response Plan outlining the province's plans to respond to West Nile this summer. (Health and Wellness, Environment, SRD, AFRD, and Municipal Affairs)
- **provided** \$2.6 million in funding over the next two years through the Telehealth Clinical Services Grant Fund to support new telehealth programs. The new programs will provide Albertans with access in their local communities to needed medical professionals and specialists. (Health and Wellness)
- **changed** regulations to allow Albertans to access their secondary insurance for chiropractic and podiatry fees beginning with their first service instead of waiting until the annual Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan annual benefit is exhausted. (Health and Wellness)
- **approved** \$552 million to construct the South Calgary Hospital, providing an additional 350 beds in the Calgary Region. (Infrastructure and Transportation)
- **provided** \$3.25 million, through the Alberta Science and Research Investments Program, to the recently launched Centre for Health and Wellness Research, which aims to change the way health is understood, and to improve overall health and quality of life for Albertans. The centre, at the University of Calgary, will focus on cross-disciplinary research in areas such as movement and mobility, identification of genetic risk factors, chronic diseases and prevention of diseases. (Innovation and Science)
- **introduced** new Dental Assistance, Optical Assistance and Education Property Tax Assistance programs for seniors. (Seniors and Community Supports)

Supporting Families and Children

- **announced** \$12 million in funding to support people working for contracted agencies. This new funding will help agencies increase salaries and staff development capabilities to help with staff recruitment and retention. Children's Services is currently working with the Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families to ensure the needs of agencies are most effectively met. (Children's Services)
- **awarded** the first Community Incentive Fund grants for projects aimed at preventing and raising awareness of family violence and bullying. The fund provided \$5.5 million to support 130 community projects throughout the province. These projects will help communities take a collaborative, coordinated response to combat family violence and bullying. (Children's Services)
- **presented** *Children, Sex & the 'Net - what every parent should know* as part of government's commitment to prevent the sexual exploitation of children and youth. The program, which aired on ACCESS TV on May 18, 2005, provided information about the dangers the Internet poses and how parents can protect their children. (Children's Services, Solicitor General and Public Security)
- **partnered** with the City of Edmonton and the University of Alberta on the \$10-million *Families First Edmonton* project to research new ways of delivering services to low-income families to provide better results, and to determine the most cost-effective, efficient use of resources. (HRE)
- **enhanced and expanded** the Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit, extending support to some 13,000 more working families and increasing the available tax credit. In 2005-06, about \$85 million in benefits will be provided to approximately 146,000 families through this credit. (Finance)
- **provided** new funding for family justice services so Albertans will have better and easier access to services such as family court counselling, mediation, parenting after separation programs, and child and spousal support resolution services. (Justice and Attorney General)

- **committed** \$455,000 in annual funding to support shelters for abused senior citizens in Calgary and Edmonton. (Seniors and Community Supports)
- **increased** the per diem grant in 146 lodges under the Lodge Assistance Program from \$6.50 to \$7.50 (an increase of \$2.8 million annually) for low and moderate-income residents of seniors' lodges. (Seniors and Community Supports)
- **supported** youth justice committees across the province with continued funding through \$325,000 in grants. The 116 youth justice committees run by 1,500 volunteers work in partnership with Alberta's justice system to provide youth aged 12 to 15 with an alternative to the formal court process and the possibility of time in custody. (Solicitor General and Public Security)
- **unveiled** details of the new provincial Integrated Child Exploitation (ICE) Unit. The province will spend more than \$1.75 million to add 13 new officers and forensic analysts to the seven existing investigators currently assigned to investigate Internet child pornography and Internet luring. The 20-member unit will be split into two teams - one based out of Edmonton, the other out of Calgary. Five police services from around the province have partnered with the province to make up the new ICE Unit. (Solicitor General and Public Security)

Building Stronger and Safer Communities

- **provided** grant funding for the Lesser Slave Lake Regional Police Service, allowing youth from the five surrounding communities to attend the crime prevention awareness program. (AAND)
- **provided** grant funding to the Woodland Cree First Nation to assist with the cost of implementing a Human Resource Assessment Study to provide appropriate training and employment opportunities for members. (AAND)
- **launched** the rural development strategy, and as part of *Budget 2005* announced nearly 30 initiatives aimed at improving rural Alberta. Initiatives ranged from improving infrastructure and attracting more doctors, to making post-secondary institutions more accessible. (AFRD)

- **launched** a new bullying prevention initiative in partnership with Education. The campaign teaches children how to make positive, empowering choices when confronted by a bully. The initiative also includes www.bullyfreealberta.ca, an online resource where parents and teens can learn what they can do to help prevent and intervene in bullying situations. (Children's Services)
- **released** *Under the Radar*, a report on the sexual exploitation of young men. The findings of the study will be used to develop programs and services for male youth involved in prostitution. (Children's Services)
- **launched** the Premier's Invite Program, which sends a personal invitation from the premier to relatives and friends of Albertans living outside the province to attend Alberta's centennial celebrations. The program has sent more than 20,000 invitations to people living in 110 countries. (Community Development)
- **announced** the rural community economic development project, under the Western Economic Partnership Agreement, as a joint effort between Alberta Economic Development and Western Economic Diversification. The project consists of regional economic development alliance funding, a community economic development project fund, and provision of community economic development expertise. (Economic Development)
- **provided** nearly \$4 million in funding from the Alberta Lottery Fund to help improve the facilities at the province's nine major fairs and exhibitions including Grande Prairie, Camrose, Lethbridge, Lloydminster, Medicine Hat, Olds, Red Deer as well as Edmonton Northlands and the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede. (Gaming)
- **provided** \$250,000 to the Rotary Challenger Park and \$150,000 to the 2005 Triathlon World Cup from the Alberta Lottery Fund. Funding will be used for Phase 3 development of the Calgary park and hosting expenses associated with the World Cup in Edmonton. (Gaming)
- **issued** more than 210 Community Facility Enhancement Program and Community Initiatives Program grants through the Alberta Lottery Fund. These grants support various projects throughout the province, including funding for program costs (Heads Up Fraud Prevention Association, \$52,000) and an awareness campaign (Foundation of the Institute for Stuttering Treatment and Research, \$54,000). (Gaming)
- **launched** the fourth annual Under 25 awareness campaign and audit to help keep alcohol out of the hands of minors. This initiative reinforces the need for liquor licensees to ask for proof of age from anyone who appears under the age of 25 and attempts to purchase liquor. (Gaming)
- **concluded**, through the courts, four workplace health and safety prosecutions, resulting in total judgments of almost \$215,000. Five additional companies were charged with *Occupational Health & Safety Act*, *Code* and *Regulation* violations. (HRE)
- **focused** attention during North American Occupational Safety and Health week on recognizing and eliminating hazards in the workplace to prevent injury and illness. The theme was "equip, educate and empower." (HRE)
- **issued** consumer alerts to caution Albertans on unscrupulous businesses and provided consumer tips for handling home repair offers after extensive flooding damaged many homes. (Government Services)
- **amended** tenancy legislation to clarify the process for tenants to move out of unhealthy or unsafe housing, prohibit tenants from objecting if they're being evicted for not paying rent, and allow landlords to return security deposits by regular mail. (Government Services)
- **amended** the *Real Estate Act* to clarify the intent of the Real Estate Assurance Fund and preserve the viability of the Fund for consumers. (Government Services)
- **allocated** \$600 million as part of the Alberta government's \$3-billion municipal infrastructure funding to Alberta cities and communities for their top infrastructure priorities. The funding will be used for roads, repaving, bridge repairs, transit, sewer upgrades, water treatment facility expansions and recreational facilities. (Infrastructure and Transportation)
- **signed** an agreement with the federal government on the transfer of \$477 million in federal gas tax funding to benefit Alberta's municipalities. All three levels of government participated in developing this agreement as part of the New Deal for Cities and Communities. (Infrastructure and Transportation)

- **provided** training from the Coordinator of Domestic Violence Initiatives to help stop domestic violence in the province. The training outlines steps police and community groups alike can take to identify potential domestic violence situations before they escalate. New funding will also help link services across government and with communities to deal with family violence cases more quickly. (Justice and Attorney General)
- **appointed** five new judges to the Provincial Court. They will sit in Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Calgary, Fort McMurray and Peace River. The new Master in Chambers will sit in Calgary Court of Queen's Bench. These appointments will help provide Albertans with timely access to the justice system. (Justice and Attorney General)
- **released** facial reconstructions and sketches from the office of Alberta's Chief Medical Examiner of two deceased individuals found in the summer of 2004 to ask for the public's assistance in identifying them. Facial reconstruction is one of the ways the justice system is working to solve crimes in the province. (Justice and Attorney General)
- **provided** new funding for video conferencing in courtrooms so more equipment can be leased and the project expanded to other areas of the province. The initiative is intended to increase security in the courtrooms because fewer prisoners will have to appear in person for routine court matters. (Justice and Attorney General, Solicitor General and Public Security, Infrastructure and Transportation)
- **provided** new funding to modernize court operations, including upgrading the court network, providing the judiciary with a separate network and ensuring necessary equipment is in place for evidence to be presented electronically. (Justice and Attorney General)
- **implemented** a disaster recovery program to assist municipalities, businesses and residents in southern and central Alberta with the costs of uninsurable damage to homes and municipal infrastructure caused by heavy rainfall and severe flooding in June 2005. (Municipal Affairs)
- **supported** 301 municipalities with \$15.1 million under the Unconditional Municipal Grant Program, which provides no-strings-attached funding to address municipal priorities. (Municipal Affairs)
- **launched** a pilot project to implement a province-wide emergency management operation system that improves response effectiveness by integrating actions by all partners during natural disasters and major emergencies. (Municipal Affairs)
- **promoted** fire and injury prevention to Aboriginal communities, organizations and individuals, through activities such as a presentation on fire safety for Native seniors, a booth at Canada Place for Aboriginal Day, and, in association with Aboriginal Fire Chiefs, the development of a fire and life safety initiative. (Municipal Affairs)
- **worked** with fire chiefs from several Métis Settlements to enhance fire protection through the formation of a Métis Settlement Fire Chiefs Association. (Municipal Affairs)
- **announced** changes to the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program, following a review and public consultation. The renewed AISH program includes a \$100 per month increase to the AISH maximum monthly living allowance, bringing it up to \$950 per month. Other program changes were also announced and will be implemented in the fall of 2005 and spring of 2006. (Seniors and Community Supports)
- **announced** with *Budget 2005* the largest single-year increase of police officers in 20 years. Highlights from an additional \$46 million in funding include 100 new officers for provincial policing, 60 new officers to combat organized crime and gangs, and increased policing grants for smaller towns and cities. (Solicitor General and Public Security)
- **participated** in a meeting of Western Ministers of Justice, Solicitor General and Health to discuss serious issues surrounding methamphetamine. The Alberta government strongly encouraged federal politicians to develop laws that make it illegal to possess precursor chemicals used to produce this drug. It was apparent from the discussions at this meeting that Alberta is a leader in developing initiatives to manage the growth of this dangerous drug. (Solicitor General and Public Security, Health and Wellness, Justice and Attorney General)
- **expanded** the Law Enforcement Review Board (LERB) to meet increased demands. A new member was added to the LERB and a second member was reappointed to handle a backlog in reviews. The

LERB is a quasi-judicial tribunal and is the appeal body for public complaints concerning police officer conduct. (Solicitor General and Public Security)

- **worked** on FireSmart Community Protection Plans in communities in the forested parts of the province to reduce the threat of wildfires, guard public safety and protect property. (SRD)

Protecting Alberta's Natural and Cultural Heritage

- **developed** a "made in Alberta" consultation strategy setting out principles and a process to consult with First Nations when the development of Crown lands and resources may infringe treaty and Aboriginal rights. (AAND)
- **showcased** the creative talent of more than 600 Alberta artists, actors, musicians, writers, dancers and chefs in the nation's capital during the first-ever Alberta Scene arts festival. (Community Development)
- **commenced** construction of the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation in Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park and the Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park visitor centre. Both facilities are a part of the Alberta Centennial Legacy Program and will provide information on Alberta's natural and cultural heritage. (Community Development)
- **announced** an investment of \$150 million over the next five years to expand, update and renew the Royal Alberta Museum. The renewed museum will capture the Alberta story, deliver an extraordinary visitor experience and attract the best touring exhibits in the world. (Community Development)
- **created** a new provincial park in honour of the former Lieutenant Governor and Alberta's centennial. The Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park protects an internationally renowned region for the nesting and migrating of waterfowl and shorebirds. (Community Development)
- **staged** the Centennial Cup Hockey Challenge in Lloydminster. Team Alberta defeated Team Saskatchewan in this unique game featuring players from the Western Hockey League. Proceeds were distributed to the league's education fund, the two provincial hockey associations, and the City of Lloydminster. (Community Development)
- **issued** a Field Surveillance Provincial Summary that reported the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board carried out 1,379 inspections of Alberta energy facilities in 2004. Industry's compliance rate with major EUB regulations was at 98 per cent in 2004, up from 97 per cent in 2003, and 96.5 per cent in 2000. (EUB)
- **released** a draft statement with Canadian Ministers of the Environment on environmental sustainability aimed at enhancing the health and well-being of Canadians, conserving and protecting the environment, and improving Canada's long-term competitiveness through intergovernmental cooperation. The statement, supported by initiatives in a number of specific areas, will form a new framework for collaborative actions by governments on environmental sustainability. (Environment)
- **responded** to the flooding in Southern Alberta through various means including providing flood management support, cooperating with local governments to support public safety and ensure protection of drinking water, supporting emergency operations, and collecting water level data in cooperation with other agencies. (Environment)
- **announced** a \$1-million grant from the Alberta Lottery Fund to assist with the expansion of the Canadian Petroleum Interpretive Centre at the Leduc #1 wellsite. The Centre, designed to give Albertans and visitors insight into the oil industry, contains artifacts, archives and interpretative displays. (Gaming)
- **organized** the successful 2005 Royal Visit, in honour of Alberta's centennial, including commemorative events held at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton, Calgary's Pengrowth Saddledome and the Royal Alberta Museum. Legacy announcements, including the Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarships, the Royal Alberta Museum and Queen Elizabeth II Highway were made during the visit. (Office of the Premier, Protocol Office, Community Development, Public Affairs Bureau)
- **provided** BearSmart lectures and educational materials to minimize encounters between bears and people. (SRD, Community Development)

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