



THE FUTURE
MEETING PRIORITIES SHARING BENEFITS
Budget 2001

SECOND QUARTER ACTIVITY REPORT

2001-02

2

Updating Albertans

Four times a year the Government of Alberta produces fiscal updates on how much it is earning, spending and investing on behalf of Albertans. It's an additional way the provincial government fulfills its promise to be accountable to Albertans. But there's more to accountability than numbers, economic indicators and financial tables.

These Quarterly Activity Reports are designed to give Albertans details on where the money goes. Each is a list of some of the most important and interesting achievements and initiatives recognized, initiated or accomplished by the government during each quarter of the 2001-02 fiscal year. The Second Quarter Activity Report covers July, August and September of 2001.

The public employees of the Alberta Government are responsible for getting many of these initiatives off the ground and maintaining them with a standard of excellence second to none. The number of accomplishments may be significant, but it's the quality and variety that this government is most proud of.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Listening to Albertans	2
Strengthening the Alberta Economy	4
Promoting Health and Wellness	6
Supporting Education and Lifelong Learning	7
Supporting Families and Children	8
Building Stronger and Safer Communities	10
Protecting Alberta's Natural and Cultural Heritage	12
Improving Efficiency and Innovation	13

LISTENING TO ALBERTANS

The Alberta Government is committed to listening to Albertans and has a proven track record of acting on what they've heard.

Through public consultation, surveys, letters, phone calls, E-mails and many other ways, the government heard from the people of Alberta. It is through this input that many changes are initiated and new policies are formed. In the Second Quarter, the government heard from Albertans as it:

- **launched** the Alberta Future Summit 2002, a public consultation to give Albertans a chance to be visionary about the future of their province after the debt is eliminated.
- **invited** public input into the draft policing standards manual. The draft standards were posted on the Solicitor General web site and distributed directly to stakeholder groups. The standards set measurable performance objectives for Alberta police services.
- **coordinated** consultations with numerous Albertans regarding information for the upcoming elections in municipalities and regional health authorities.
- **sponsored** workshops for elected officials, through municipalities and the University of Alberta, to help develop a more responsive local government sector.
- **provided** advice and information on Alberta Registries and consumer issues to more than 54,000 Albertans through the Government Services toll-free call centre.
- **initiated** a public consultation on whether a regulation is needed to govern the operation of travel clubs and if so, what it should include.
- **sent** prosecutors to participate in a First Nations Cultural Camp to increase their awareness of aboriginal traditions, spirituality and communities, and to promote culturally sensitive prosecutions. The camp is in direct response to a recommendation from the Justice Summit, "Increase sensitivity and cultural awareness."
- **developed** a new policy for parking placards for persons with disabilities. Groups representing those with disabilities initiated a review of the current policy and continue to provide valuable input towards the new policy's implementation.
- **released** Environics survey results that show 82 per cent of Albertans feel the Future Summit will be valuable in soliciting input to Alberta's future.
- **released** the final Treasury Annual Report on September 28, 2001.
- **completed** analysis phase of the Gaming Licensing Policy Review. Information collected through formal stakeholder consultations, market research, and literature reviews helped develop recommendations for policies to address proposals related to the growth or expansion of gaming activities in Alberta.

- **initiated** stakeholder consultations respecting proposed amendments to the *Gaming and Liquor Act* and the *Gaming and Liquor Regulation*.
- **held** *Charting a New Course for Workers Compensation* Symposium. Ninety-six stakeholders representing employers, labour, injured workers and interested third parties discussed the changes to the system.
- **conducted** a client satisfaction survey at 24 Alberta Human Resources and Employment Labour Market Information Centres that revealed 96 percent of the walk-in clients surveyed were satisfied with the services and information available.
- **distributed** 72,500 discussion guides and questionnaires titled “Extending the Alberta Advantage” as part of an MLA-led review of low income programs.
- **completed** review process for the province’s occupational health and safety regulations.
- **produced** an information compact disk on the Alberta Seniors Benefit program for distribution to individuals and organizations that provide services to seniors.
- **consulted** with the Grand Chiefs of Treaty 6, 7 and 8, and Alberta Assembly of First Nations Vice-Chiefs to address the Aboriginal Policy Framework and related activities.
- **implemented** changes to natural gas royalty invoices at the request of the energy industry to reflect changes to NOVA pipeline tolls.
- **created** a new call centre to respond to inquiries about electric and natural gas rates or terms and conditions of services for regulated utilities.
- **established** a steering committee of stakeholders who will develop strategies, identify and recommend potential projects and address barriers to the use of carbon dioxide emissions in enhanced hydrocarbon recovery.
- **initiated** a process to amend regulations to make hunting more accessible to persons with disabilities.
- **conducted** Northern Leaders’ Roundtable meetings in High Level, Fort Vermilion and Swan Hills; and participated in the *Prospects North Conference* held in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.
- **held** a two-day hearing, attended by about 50 people, on the Notice of Intention to designate the Low Pressure Plant, the Administration Building and Pumphouse #1 at Epcor’s Rosedale plant site in Edmonton as a Provincial Historic Resources.

STRENGTHENING THE ALBERTA ECONOMY

Albertans benefit from having a strong, healthy economy. This year the government estimates Alberta's economy will lead the nation in growth, and will create over 40,000 new jobs.

This quarter construction crews were in action across the province building new infrastructure like roads, bridges and schools. Alberta's Supernet – a high speed network connecting Alberta Schools, libraries and hospitals – moved closer to becoming a reality. The province also approved the drilling of more than 400 new oil and gas wells.

Our government undertook many actions to strengthen the Alberta economy. In the Second Quarter it:

- **proclaimed** insurance regulations making Alberta's insurance industry more accountable and increase consumer protection for Albertans.
- **enacted** Natural Gas Price Protection Regulation that outlines the process for determining potential rebates and the mechanics of implementing rebate programs under the Natural Gas Price Protection Act.
- **streamlined** the process for obtaining temporary water licences in light of unusually dry conditions this year. Producers and farmers were eligible for temporary diversion licences (one year), providing an adequate water supply for livestock and other farm-related activities facing emergency situations.
- **coordinated** the design and construction of a viewpoint at a 'dangerous' site at Grande Cache. Once completed, the viewpoint will provide a safe view of the Sulphur Gates canyon and provide greater opportunity for tourism.
- **completed**, started or continued several major highway construction projects. Highlights include continued twinning of the North South Trade Corridor, the opening of the Ellerslie Road/Highway 2 interchange in Edmonton and the extension of Deerfoot Trail in Calgary.
- **launched** the Partnership Rest Area Program with private-sector partners. Rural businesses on or near highways provide washrooms, parking, picnic tables, and travel information to the public without charge.
- **led** an initiative to create a coherent government approach to address Aboriginal participation in the Alberta economy.
- **proclaimed** the Regulated Accounting Profession Act (RAPA) and the accompanying regulations came into force. RAPA consolidated three previous accounting acts and will ensure Albertans continue to receive quality professional accounting services.
- **led** a successful mission to Los Angeles on Canada Day to promote Alberta products and business opportunities.

- **signed** the Strategic Highway Infrastructure Program agreement with the federal government. The jointly funded program will provide \$92 million over the next four years for projects on Alberta's portions of the national highway system.
- **issued** the *Alberta Reserves 2000 and Supply/Demand Outlook 2001-2010*. The report looks at Alberta's reserves to year-end 2000 for all energy sectors and gives a 10-year forecast of supply and demand for these sectors.
- **approved** nearly 400 oil and gas wells and pipelines on public lands in the province. Each approval included criteria to minimize the impact on natural resources.
- **announced** the provincial government would propose legislation to assume responsibility for Intensive Livestock Operations from municipalities.
- **delivered** over 34,000 payments under the Canada-Alberta Farm Income Assistance, Alberta Farm Income Assistance and Alberta Drought Assistance programs. These payments of \$10.29 for cultivated acres and \$4 per native forage acre are directed at provincial producers dealing with economic difficulties as well as to help alleviate the worst drought conditions in 130 years.
- **implemented** the Labour Mobility Chapter under Canada's Agreement on Internal Trade. As of July 1, 46 of 51 professional regulatory bodies in Alberta have developed agreements with other provinces to recognize the qualifications of each other's workers, helping to address skills shortages.
- **released** an annual trade report showing the continued benefits of free trade for the province.
- **completed** a study of Alberta's service exports sector, which jumped in value to \$3.6 billion in 1999, up from \$2 billion in 1994. This information assists the province in developing Alberta-specific priorities for the ongoing World Trade Organization services negotiations.
- **initiated** a strong defence of Alberta's forestry practices in response to U.S. softwood lumber trade action. Participated in initial discussions with the U.S. to attempt to find a long term, durable solution to softwood lumber trade differences.
- **signed** contracts relating to the construction of the Alberta SuperNet. The Government of Alberta will provide a maximum \$193 million to the project.
- **participated** in the C-Prosperity Initiative by providing the Calgary Regional Partnership a grant of \$200,000 to assist with the development of a cluster-based economic development strategy that will take a regional approach to attracting business and investment to the metro Calgary region.
- **moved** toward 2001/02 target of \$35 million in land sales with \$23 million in completed sales and unconditional offers and signed \$11.5 million in conditional offers.
- **participated** in the Annual Premiers' Conference leading discussions on provincial involvement in continental energy discussions.

PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Health care is important to all Albertans. That's why the Alberta Government continues to search for innovative ways to improve the health system and address the needs and priorities of Albertans.

In the Second Quarter, the government continued to focus on the health of Albertans as it:

- **organized** a partnership among correctional services from the Prairie provinces and the territories to share information on issues facing offenders with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Fetal Alcohol Effect. Meetings also began with the Edmonton Police Service and Crown prosecutors to examine a more coordinated way to address FAS/FAE in youth in the Edmonton area.
- **completed** a 20-month study on air quality in the County of Grande Prairie. The study was conducted in response to public concern over the effect of oil and gas activity in the area. The released report showed that the county's air is well within the department's guidelines for air quality.
- **provided** emergency response support for the BP Canada Fort Saskatchewan ethane cavern storage fires and the Barrington blowout west of Zama.
- **assisted** with a national investigation into endocrine disruptors within the natural environment on the Wapiti River.
- **appointed** 63 members to the province's regional health authorities, with 126 positions to be filled by election.
- **added** chickenpox vaccinations to Alberta's immunization program for one-year-old children, as of July 1.
- **awarded** five seniors' lodge upgrading contracts for a total of \$7.4 million. Of the 121 lodges eligible for upgrading in the province, 95 are now complete, 12 are under construction, and three are in the design phase.
- **opened** two new buildings at the Strathcona Care Centre in Sherwood Park – the Strathcona Alzheimer Care Centre and Strathcona Laurier House.
- **supported** the participation of more than 400 Alberta athletes and coaches at the 2001 Canada Games in London, Ontario. Team Alberta athletes earned 23 gold medals, breaking a previous record of 16 gold medals in 1989 and, placing Team Alberta fourth overall.
- **sponsored** the National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA) international conference held in Edmonton in August. Hundreds of delegates from around the world shared their experience, expertise and challenges on programs to help victims of crime and disaster.
- **established** a new scholarship for Alberta's young athletes in commemoration of the 8th IAAF World Championships in Athletics.

SUPPORTING EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

It's essential to get a good formal education, but people don't stop learning when they graduate from high school or university. So, the Alberta Government supports learning wherever it happens.

Alberta's focus on learning is paying big dividends for Albertans. Alberta is a hub for high-tech research in medicine and engineering, and our institutions boast some of the most talented researchers in the world. Overall, Alberta workers are among the best educated in the country.

An important part of a solid education system is having world-class facilities. In the Second Quarter the Alberta government began significant infrastructure projects across the province.

The provincial government supported initiatives that ensure Albertans will continue to be leaders in the new century as it:

- **announced** 43 school facility projects worth \$31.6 million for rural school boards as part of the New Century Schools Plan.
- **sponsored** a video production highlighting young women in non-traditional trades and technology occupations.
- **assumed** responsibility for financing of all Alberta Student Loans issued after July 31, 2001 – when the province's risk-share agreement with CIBC expired. Alberta has one of the most comprehensive student assistance programs in the country.
- **promoted** a northern Alberta-based pilot project related to career options through apprenticeship training.
- **allocated** 105 bursaries amounting to more than \$300,000 through the *Northern Bursaries Program*.
- **supported** a hands-on chance for high school women to explore high-tech careers through Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science and Technology (WISEST) Summer Research Program.
- **sponsored** the First National Scientific Congress on Nutrition & Athletic Performance. The Congress allowed the world's foremost researchers to share and discuss new knowledge on performance enhancement through improved nutrition.
- **sponsored** the production of a 13-episode television series airing on the Aboriginal People Television Network entitled *Profiles of Success*. This series highlights successful Aboriginal entrepreneurs from Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan and Manitoba.
- **released** \$85 million Infrastructure Renewal Envelope grants to the post-secondary institutions to help the institutions preserve and maintain their facilities.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Many people have come to Alberta to make a better life for their children and themselves. Alberta has grown by the size of a small city every year since 1995.

Creating an environment where families flourish and grow involves every government ministry, each and every day. This quarter the Alberta Government continued to support families through a diverse range of initiatives. Increases to the Alberta Seniors Benefit provide more support for Alberta seniors. A streamlined court process regarding guardianship of children reduces stress for children and parents. The ‘Wednesday’s Child’ series on television helped find loving homes for orphans, and a ‘Free Fishing Weekend’ program encouraged families to get out and enjoy Alberta’s beautiful outdoors together.

The Alberta government funds and encourages many other programs and initiatives that support children and families. This quarter the government:

- **launched** a pilot project in Edmonton that streamlines the process for unrepresented litigants involved in matters concerning custody, access or private guardianship of children. This will help eliminate unnecessary hearings and adjournments, while saving time for the court and all of the parties involved.
- **completed** an evaluation of the Alberta Child Health Benefit (ACHB). Information sources included ACHB staff and registrants, health service providers, organizations serving low-income families and administrative data. Among program registrants, 97 per cent indicated that the ACHB had a positive impact on their children’s health and 92 per cent indicated that the ACHB provides the supplemental health services most needed by their children.
- **provided** a minimum 4 per cent increase to eligible seniors through the Alberta Seniors Benefit program. This program provides approximately \$12.4 million each month in cash benefits to over 125,000 lower-income seniors in Alberta.
- **approved** approximately 2,300 applications from seniors under the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program for a total expenditure of approximately \$5.3 million.
- **announced** \$20 million for the 2001-02 Healthy Aging Partnership Initiative funds to assist in the development of new seniors’ supportive housing projects, or to modify existing projects to accommodate aging in place for low and moderate-income seniors.

- **responded** to over 40,000 calls through the Alberta Seniors Information Line (1-800-642-3853).
- **premiered** the Wednesday's Child series on CTV. Every Wednesday a special needs child or siblings in need of adoption are profiled on CFRN-TV in Edmonton and CFCN-TV in Calgary. The series, which debuted in 1981, has become a key tool in helping to find adoptive homes for children.
- **assisted** the Edmonton Inner City Children's Project Society in funding of school supplies and recreational programs for five inner city schools.
- **promoted** National Fishing Week (July 1-8) and the Free Fishing Weekend encouraging Alberta families to take part in this healthy and educational activity.
- **implemented** the Alberta's Future Leader's Program in 14 Aboriginal communities in Alberta, with the support of 31 summer youth workers. Recreation, sport and arts activities are used as prevention and intervention tools for the development of skills among the children and youth.
- **coordinated** a memorial service bringing together hundreds of police and peace officers, special guests, members of the public and the families of Alberta officers who died in the line of duty. This year's service included a special tribute to the officers who died valiantly trying to save the lives of others in the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C.

BUILDING STRONGER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES

Alberta's communities are diverse, vibrant, strong and safe. Albertans want to keep them that way.

This quarter, the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics released figures showing Alberta's violent and property crime rates declined three per cent in 2000 — the third consecutive annual decline. Alberta's overall crime rate remains the lowest in Western Canada.

The Alberta Government's commitment to crime prevention is ongoing. The province has provided over \$1.3 million to almost 200 crime prevention projects over the past two years.

These figures acknowledge the government's efforts to build stronger and safer. During Second Quarter, the government:

- **announced** a Ministerial Task Force to review Alberta's security and emergency preparedness in light of terrorist attacks in the U.S.
- **implemented** a disaster recovery program to provide financial assistance to residents and municipalities in the Beaumont, Leduc and Edson areas that were affected by severe flooding at the end of July. The program compensates individuals for uninsurable, essential items and assists municipalities with clean-up costs.
- **processed** 564 eligible applications to the Underground Petroleum Storage Tank Site Remediation Program by the end of the second quarter and worked with owners to assess and clean up their underground petroleum storage tank sites.
- **worked** with federal officials to ensure the interests of Alberta are incorporated into planning for the G8 Summit in Kananaskis in June 2002.
- **provided** more than \$330,000 to regional partnerships throughout the province. The funding enables these partnerships to explore opportunities for cooperation in a variety of areas including economic development, transportation, and service delivery to citizens and business. Two partnerships that received funding are the Alberta Capital Region Alliance, which includes Edmonton and surrounding communities, and the Palliser Economic Partnership, which includes Medicine Hat and its neighbours.
- **provided** almost \$100,000 to 15 community crime prevention projects for youth or seniors.
- **issued** an Environmental Protection Order calling for Imperial Oil and Devon Estates Limited to develop and implement clean up plans for soil contamination in the Lynnvie Ridge area.

- **issued** an Environmental Protection Order to Hi Temps Products of Western Canada Inc. to ensure the manufacturer of rubber products addresses public concern over odours produced by the plant.
- **paid** \$26.1 million in grants in place of taxes on 6,800 municipal accounts. The Grants in Place of Taxes Program provides municipalities with funding to cover the cost of municipal services provided to eligible properties owned by the government of Alberta, which are not subject to property tax. This program involves a total of about 8,000 accounts and an annual budget of nearly \$31.7 million.
- **helped** the Northwest Boreal Region of Alberta Environment eliminate a potential flood hazard to the Driftpile First Nations and the town of Peace River by assisting in the removal of major log jams from the Driftpile River and confluence of Peace and Heart Rivers.
- **issued** consumer alerts to caution Albertans on unscrupulous businesses and provided consumer tips for handling sales contracts in a variety of situations.
- **increased** the field presence of the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board inspecting all sour gas drilling operations taking place near populated areas and responding faster to sour gas complaints. These changes were made in response to the Public Advisory Committee on Public Safety and Sour Gas recommendations.
- **awarded** 14 grants totaling \$365,435 through the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund. These projects help to reduce discrimination or help organizations to make changes that foster equity and fairness.

PROTECTING ALBERTA'S NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Alberta is recognized around the world for its awe-inspiring natural beauty and unique cultural heritage. Albertans take pride in their history and want it preserved forever.

In recognition of this worthy goal, the Alberta government preserved unique natural regions, helped clean up highways, and worked with Provincial Archives to preserve priceless historic photography.

To ensure that natural places and special memories are preserved for generations to come, the Alberta government performed the following activities during Second Quarter of this year.

It:

- **established** five new parks under the Special Places program, adding more than 697,000 hectares to Alberta's provincial parks and protected areas system: Caribou Mountains Wildland Provincial Park, the largest protected area designated by the province; Peace River Wildland Provincial Park; and three new designations in Kananaskis Country - Sheep River Provincial Park, the Bluerock Wildland Provincial Park and Don Getty Wildland Provincial Park.
- **closed** campgrounds and recreational areas in Kananaskis Country during the fire ban which commenced on the Labor Day weekend.
- **developed** a new instructional video for the annual Highway Clean-Up program. The program, in its 25th year, involved over 10,000 participants from 369 clubs across the province. The volunteers collected over 35,000 bags of garbage - enough to fill almost three Olympic-sized swimming pools.
- **partnered** to assist the Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council Kapawe'no First Nation in hosting the Seventh Generation Elder's Gathering for Treaty 6, 7 and 8.
- **celebrated** the 11th annual Parks Day in approximately 25 different provincial parks across the province, with more than 4,770 people in attendance. Visitors had the opportunity to learn more about our natural environment and to participate in a range of activities celebrating Alberta's provincial parks network.
- **completed** the preservation work by the Provincial Archives of Alberta of the Pollard Nitrate Negative Collection, which consists of over 10,000 photographic negatives. Harry Pollard, a well-known Calgary photographer, started his studio in the 1890s and his early portrait work of Alberta's aboriginal peoples earned him recognition as one of the top portrait photographers in Alberta.

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND INNOVATION

Albertans have worked hard to establish our province as a leader in technology and innovation. In the Second Quarter, Albertans realized some of the benefits of that hard work. Albertans continued to be leaders in the areas of agriculture, health and technology. A perfect example is the announcement of the creation of the Banff International Research Station for Mathematics (BIRS). The U.S. National Science Foundation, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Government of Alberta will fund the cost-shared project. BIRS, scheduled to start operations in 2003, will be the basis for new discoveries and technologies in many sectors.

In the Second Quarter of the 2001-02 fiscal year the government:

- **participated** with other ministries and agencies in a cross-government initiative to streamline the environmental review and approval process for electrical transmission lines in the province.
- **launched** a video conferencing pilot program to explore whether using video conferencing to conduct business, meetings and training in rural regions can create efficiencies and reduce expenses.
- **collaborated** with the Alberta Science and Research Authority to develop a provincial Life Sciences strategy.
- **announced** a new National Institute for Nanotechnology to be built at the University of Alberta. The province and federal government will jointly fund the \$120 million state-of-the-art institute.
- **approved** a new policy that allows local school boards to tailor their facilities and programming to better meet the needs of their students.
- **launched** *Your Gateway to Outdoor Adventure* web site to help the public and the tourist industry plan successful trips to the province's parks and protected areas. This unique searchable database has received an average of 100,000 hits per month since it was launched.
- **provided** Alberta film goes with improved access to ratings of new and current movies through the Film Classification section of the Community Development web site. Ratings are listed under Now Playing, Coming Attractions and Monthly Ratings.
- **closed** the Bow River Correctional Centre in Calgary effective September 1. The facility was no longer cost-effective to operate as a correctional centre. Originally designed to hold more than 100 offenders, the daily count in recent years was half that number. Offenders were transferred to other existing correctional facilities or programs.
- **developed** a database of the province's manufacturers of industrial machinery and equipment.

www.finance.gov.ab.ca

PRODUCED BY

