

# BUDGET 2004

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2004-2005 Quarterly Budget Report

Q2 ACTIVITY REPORT

NOVEMBER 2004

Alberta

# Updating Albertans

The government has three core businesses that make up its overall business plan and that guide government in its decision-making on behalf of Albertans. The core businesses are:

- **PEOPLE** - The goals for the *People* core business are directed at improving the quality of life in Alberta for individuals and their families through the government's priorities for health, education, our children, those in need, and Aboriginal Albertans.
- **PROSPERITY** - The goals for the *Prosperity* core business focus on protecting the quality of life in Alberta through the government's priorities for our economy, work force and work places, infrastructure, value-added industries, export trade and financial and fiscal position.
- **PRESERVATION** - The goals for the *Preservation* core business reflect the government's priorities for community safety, our renewable resources, the environment, our natural, historical and cultural resources, and Alberta's relations with other levels of government.

The purpose of this quarterly activity report is to show Albertans what activities the government undertook in the second quarter of this fiscal year in support of People, Prosperity and Preservation. 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 core businesses 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 second quarter, Albertans had a say as government:

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- **met** with various private and public organizations with an interest in northern development during council meetings in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, and the High Level areas, as well as with representatives from the City of Cold Lake, Town of Lac La Biche and Lakeland County. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, AAND)
- **supported** the Alberta First Nations Elders Gathering on the Tsuu T'ina Nation and the Treaty 8 First Nation Elders Gathering in Fort McMurray to discuss issues and to develop a process for inclusion in Alberta-First Nations relations. (AAND)
- **completed** consultation on the Rural Alberta Land of Opportunity report. The MLA Steering Committee for Rural Development led the consultation. (Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, AFRD)
- **opened** a call centre for the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization (CAIS) Program in response to producers' need for information, as well as introduced on-hold messaging, increased staffing, and started a split shift to improve the turnaround time on 2003 claims. (Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, AFSC)
- **extended** the CAIS Program deadlines for producers to select their protection level for both 2003 and 2004 program years and submit their supplementary forms. This allowed producers time to evaluate the impact of changes to the program and make well-informed risk management decisions. (AFSC)
- **began** collecting public input on a management plan for Devonshire Beach in Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park. (Community Development)
- **listened** to Albertans' concerns about the level of service provided by electric utilities, in particular when attempting to resolve their billing concerns. The government worked with Direct Energy to improve customer bills, which led to bill enhancements implemented in September. (Energy)
- **oversaw** the Alberta Water Council's first meeting, which took place in August 2004. Conversations highlighted the importance of partnerships, water education and research. (Environment)
- **responded** to public concerns regarding the sustainability of various water uses, particularly water used for the enhanced recovery of oil (oilfield injection), by appointing the Advisory Committee on Water Use Practice and Policy. The Committee includes representatives from government, industry, environmental organizations and the public, and has submitted a final report to the Environment Minister. (Environment)
- **consulted** with Albertans by the survey, *It's Your Future*. The survey was distributed to all Alberta households and asked Albertans to rank their priorities for the government and identify how future windfall revenue should be used. (Finance)

- **distributed** a comprehensive guide to all Alberta households explaining the automobile insurance reforms that took effect October 1, 2004. The new auto insurance system provides for lower premiums for good drivers, fair pricing for less-experienced drivers with clean driving records, and faster treatment for people injured in collisions. (Finance)
- **provided** advice and information on registries, landlord-tenant matters and consumer issues to more than 48,000 Albertans through the Government Services' toll-free call centre. (Government Services)
- **assisted** more than 2,000 Albertans through the Utilities Consumer Advocate with concerns about retail electricity and natural gas service. (Government Services)
- **announced** a review of the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program, along with the release of an AISH discussion guide. AISH recipients, families, disability organizations and other Albertans are encouraged to provide input on ways to renew the AISH program. The deadline for submissions is November 30, 2004. (Human Resources and Employment, HRE)
- **partnered** with City of Edmonton Transit to develop the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) Transit Pass 12-month pilot project, which is now underway and involves 2,500 AISH clients. Participants in the program purchase monthly adult transit passes at a reduced rate. (HRE)
- **released** the report of the government MLA Committee on Strengthening Alberta's Role in Confederation. The report makes 26 recommendations based on more than 700 submissions received from Albertans at 13 public forums in 12 communities, over the Internet, and from letters, e-mails and phone calls. (International and Intergovernmental Relations, IIR)
- **issued** a writ September 29, 2004 for a province-wide Senate nominee election to be held in conjunction with a provincial general election. Albertans will be asked to name four "Senators-in-waiting." Premier Ralph Klein has again asked the Prime Minister to heed the wishes of Albertans and appoint the Senate nominees chosen by Albertans to the Upper Chamber. (IIR)
- **announced** that seniors in Alberta would benefit from: changes made to the Alberta Seniors Benefit (ASB) program, enhancements to optical and dental assistance, the exemption from health insurance premiums and assistance with education property taxes. The first of these enhancements became effective July 1, 2004, when the ASB program added approximately 17,000 eligible seniors and increased average cash benefits by approximately \$17 per month. (Seniors)
- **compiled** feedback to the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) on public guardianship services regarding dependent adults. The feedback will be included in the Future Directions report. Overall, dependent adults report satisfaction with the personal decision-making they receive by OPG staff. (Seniors)
- **mailed** surveys to 125 Private Guardians for feedback on the functions of the Office of the Public Guardian and for suggestions for supports that could be offered to assist them in their role. Survey results will be reported at a later date. (Seniors)

## PEOPLE

The following activities support the *People* core business and particularly areas that Albertans have identified as priorities including health, education and children.

### Promoting Health and Wellness

The state of Alberta's health care system is a priority for all Albertans. The Alberta Government continues to search for innovative ideas and initiatives to improve the sustainability of the health system and reassure Albertans that their health care needs will be addressed. In the second quarter, the government continued to focus on the health of Albertans as it:

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- **implemented** a pilot health care practicum placement program with northern regional health authorities and post-secondary institutions. (AAND)
  - **commenced** construction of a new \$14-million state-of-the-art level 3 laboratory in Edmonton to greatly increase the province's surveillance and animal disease testing capability, and prepare Alberta to better manage any further animal health challenges. (AFRD)
  - **provided** \$70,393 in funding to Lakeland Centre to expand their programming supporting adults with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. (Community Development)
  - **provided** education on preventing and responding to abuse of vulnerable adults in care. Staff held information sessions about the *Protection for Persons in Care Act* to more than 100 health care students and 20 community service providers. (Community Development)
  - **delivered** information sessions to municipalities across the province on standards and guidelines for mosquito surveillance and the use of pesticides to ensure an integrated response to West Nile virus. (Environment)
  - **recognized** more than 300 VLT retail locations with a Responsible Gaming Award. The Responsible Gaming Program is a mandatory problem-gambling awareness program for VLT retailers. (Gaming)
  - **provided** a \$2-million injection from the Alberta Lottery Fund to help build a new City Centre YMCA in Edmonton. The facility will accommodate about 600,000 visits largely from inner-city residents and downtown workers each year. (Gaming)
  - **proclaimed** the *Prevention of Youth Tobacco Use Amendment Act* to expand the definition of public places where youth can be charged with possession or use of tobacco to include buildings such as schools, shopping malls, streets and parks. (Health and Wellness)
  - **expanded** the provincial influenza immunization program to include children aged six to 23 months, their caregivers, and family members. An estimated 300,000 Albertans, including 60,000 infants and toddlers, their household contacts and caregivers, are eligible to receive the vaccination. (Health and Wellness)

- **released** the results of the *2004 Alberta Health Survey*, an independent annual survey conducted by the Population Research Laboratory of the University of Alberta. The survey shows 89 per cent of Albertans are satisfied with the way health services are provided. (Health and Wellness)
- **launched** the Community ChooseWell Challenge, the latest Healthy U initiative, that encourages Albertans to make simple, healthy choices about eating and daily physical activity, while showcasing community efforts. (Health and Wellness)
- **announced** more than \$1 million in funding over three years to support a multidisciplinary team approach for two programs in Calgary that will better equip family physicians to diagnose and treat children and adults with mental health symptoms. (Health and Wellness)
- **announced** nearly \$900,000 in funding over three years for the Calgary Refugee Health Program to provide a first point of contact with the health care system in Canada for refugees. (Health and Wellness)
- **provided** premium-free health coverage for more low-income families by raising qualifying income levels by \$2,000 for the Alberta Child Health Benefit (ACHB) and for the Alberta Adult Health Benefit. The government also extended coverage under ACHB to 18 and 19-year-olds living with their parents and attending high school. (HRE)
- **provided** premium-free health benefits to 4,974 Income Support Learners (and their dependents) starting educational programs in August and September. (HRE)
- **participated** in the First Ministers' Meeting on health care renewal, September 13 to 15, 2004 in Ottawa. The meeting resulted in agreement on a *Plan to Strengthen Health Care* in Canada. (IIR)
- **opened** the \$37.4-million High Level Health Centre. The facility includes 28 acute care beds, 10 continuing care beds, and a community health centre. (Infrastructure)
- **monitored** the presence of West Nile virus in wild birds through an extensive surveillance program. (Sustainable Resource Development)

## Supporting Education and Lifelong Learning

The Alberta government supports learning as a lifelong process and offers Albertans access to a variety of learning opportunities. In the second quarter, the provincial government honoured its commitment to education and lifelong learning as it:

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- **funded** projects under the *Northern LINKS Program* to assist Northern Alberta students make decisions related to the transition from secondary to post-secondary education. (AAND)
- **coordinated** the preparation of a number of studies under the *Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse Project*, an initiative based on a partnership with five northern colleges. The studies will link employment demands in Northern Alberta with post-secondary education. (AAND)
- **supported** the first-ever Energy Education Institute for Alberta teachers. About 30 teachers from across the province participated in energy presentations and site visits for one week in August. The aim of the Institute is to promote education and awareness of Alberta's energy sector. (Energy)
- **promoted** the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board's "Kidzone" web site and "Petroleum Play and Power Play" activity booklets, which are linked to the Alberta science and social studies curricula for Grades 3 to 5. The web site and booklets include a collection of games, puzzles, and activities that teach children about the energy industry and electricity. (Energy and Utilities Board)
- **developed** a new interactive display to help raise awareness about the Alberta Lottery Fund for the summer fair season. More than 43,000 Albertans visited the display during the Calgary Stampede, Edmonton Klondike Days, Olds Mountain View County Fair and Lethbridge Whoop-Up Days. (Gaming)
- **opened** the \$21.5 million Trillium Centre in Sherwood Park. This facility hosts two schools accommodating 660 public students and 500 Catholic students, as well as housing the neighbourhood office of the Children's Services Authority. (Infrastructure)
- **provided** the East Central Francophone and the St. Paul Education Regional Division with \$20 million to improve school facilities for the majority of students in St. Paul. The funding is part of a creative solution that addresses the facility needs of Francophone, Protestant and Catholic students. (Infrastructure)
- **announced** additional provincial funding that will allow school boards to hire approximately 2,250 new teachers over the next three years and reduce class sizes to meet recommendations from Alberta's Commission on Learning. (Learning)
- **released** the provincial achievement and diploma exam results, which demonstrate Alberta students' continued high level of achievement. Grade 12 students continue to improve on provincial diploma exams, while students in Grades 3, 6 and 9 maintain strong results on provincial achievement tests. (Learning)
- **established** the Campus Alberta Quality Council. This new council will review proposals for all new degree programs in Alberta to ensure the quality of Alberta's degree programs is maintained. This new process will also enhance access to degree programs by providing colleges and technical institutions with the opportunity to propose new degree programs. (Learning)
- **played** a key role in developing a living outdoor classroom showcasing the diversity of Alberta's aquatic habitats near downtown Calgary through the Pearce Estate Park Interpretive Wetland. (SRD)



## Supporting Families and Children

Every government ministry is responsible for initiatives that contribute to an atmosphere where Alberta families can succeed and flourish. In this quarter, the government:

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- **proclaimed** the *Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act*, which focuses on supporting families caring for disabled children. Information packages about the new legislation and a related toll-free information line were distributed to parents and stakeholders throughout the summer. (Children's Services)
- **committed** \$6 million for 16 parent link centres across the province. The new centres will provide supports to help children come to school ready to learn. Parents will also receive help in striving to enable their children to reach their potential. (Children's Services)
- **launched** a new youth awareness campaign with the second annual Mocktail Mix-Off, a friendly competition to create non-alcoholic cocktails, on September 15, 2004 to help highlight fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. The new advertising campaign is targeted at youth aged 12 to 17, and was produced in partnership by Children's Services, Learning and the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. (Children's Services)
- **supported** the Alberta Summer Games in High River, Okotoks and the MD of Foothills between July 22 and 25, 2004. More than 2,400 young Alberta athletes aged 12 to 17, and more than 400 coaches and chaperones, participated in the Games. (Community Development)
- **provided** opportunities for children and youth in 12 Aboriginal communities to participate in sport, recreation, leadership development and arts camp activities through the Alberta's Future Leaders program. This program is a partnership among provincial and federal agencies, communities and private sector businesses. (Community Development)
- **negotiated or obtained**, through Child Support Services, 1,294 child support agreements and orders worth \$455,078 per month for Income Support, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped and Alberta Adult Health Benefit clients, and for other low-income Albertans. (HRE)
- **committed** to making every effort to get to Alberta families the money they are legally entitled to under Alberta's Maintenance Enforcement Program. Recent changes to the program mean interest will now be charged on payments owed to Alberta children and families starting in fall 2005. (Justice)
- **provided** approximately \$48 million to around 141,500 seniors under the Alberta Seniors Benefit program. The average monthly cash benefit was \$121 per senior. (Seniors)
- **approved** approximately 5,900 applications from low-income seniors under the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program for a total of approximately \$9.5 million (Seniors)
- **provided** approximately \$9.2 million in grants to support the housing needs of low-income families, seniors and people with special needs. (Seniors)

## PROSPERITY

The following activities support the *Prosperity* core business and contribute to a better quality of life for Albertans.

### Strengthening the Alberta Economy

Alberta is expected to be a leader in economic growth in 2004-05 and various government ministries are involved in a number of initiatives to try to continue that trend. In this quarter, the government:

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- **established** the Aboriginal Tourism Advisory Council, which will provide guidance to the provincial government on Aboriginal tourism development, marketing and training. (AAND)
- **announced** new protocols to give the elk and deer industry increased flexibility in importing live cervids for production use on Alberta farms. (AFRD)
- **announced** a go-forward six-points BSE recovery strategy and \$230 million in additional BSE funds to cover Alberta's 40 per cent share of two new national cattle programs, as well as made-in-Alberta components. The funds also assist with BSE surveillance costs to help meet international testing targets. (AFRD)
- **launched** the Choice Matters campaign to encourage Alberta farmers to make their views known on marketing choice for wheat and barley. (AFRD)
- **implemented** an Equity Advance Option for the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program that allows equity losses to be taken into account when determining payment entitlement. (AFSC)
- **expanded** the Project Investor Financing program to facilitate increased investment into beef slaughter projects. This program provides financing for investors to purchase shares in project companies that support rural development or the agriculture value-added industry. (AFSC)
- **approved** 70 loans for \$9.1 million, including 48 loans (\$7.4 million) received by beef producers, through the Alberta Disaster Assistance Loan Program. (AFSC)
- **provided** 55 loans from Agriculture Financial Services Corporation Commercial to rural businesses, supporting more than \$30 million in investment. (AFSC)
- **undertook** a number of initiatives to further the economic component, *Securing Tomorrow's Prosperity*, of the government's 20-year plan. Initiatives include: presenting a workshop about exporting to the U.S. in partnership with The Business Link, promoting Alberta's capabilities at the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International symposium and conference in Anaheim, California, hosting the second annual Innovative Manufacturing Week in partnership with Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, Calgary Economic Development, the National Resource Council, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, and other key industry associations and business organizations. (Economic Development)
- **attracted** Dell Canada Inc.'s customer contact centre to Edmonton, in collaboration with the Canadian Consulate General in Dallas, Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. Potential employment is in the range of 500 jobs and investment is estimated to exceed \$5 million. (Economic Development)

- **developed** a new four per cent levy to replace the existing five per cent hotel room tax, effective April 1, 2005. Revenue from the levy will increase the tourism marketing and development budget from \$24 million in 2004-2005 to \$42.4 million in 2005-2006. (Economic Development)
- **developed and marketed** the Canadian Badlands as a tourist destination in cooperation with municipal leaders in southeast Alberta. A product development opportunity assessment was commissioned and a portal web site that profiles the Badlands was developed. (Economic Development)
- **contributed** to the reopening of the Grande Cache Coal Corporation by providing intelligence such as market information and alternative sources of finance. This was a critical step in maintaining the economic well-being of the Grande Cache area. (Economic Development)
- **awarded** a grant to the Canadian Cattlemen's Association as part of the BSE Market Recovery Program. The Association used the grant to address trade advocacy, market access, and policy and trade harmonization issues. (Economic Development)
- **developed** the Transmission Regulation, which provides guidance on how new transmission infrastructure will be developed in coming years. Necessary new transmission will serve to strengthen Alberta's economy by providing a safe, reliable and economically competitive electric system to serve all customers. (Energy)
- **issued** leases to Grande Cache Coal Corporation, allowing it to reopen the former Smoky River coal mine near Grande Cache. Once it is in full production, the mine will employ up to 300 permanent staff. (Energy)
- **announced** that Alberta is debt-free, with the final \$3-billion instalment being set aside to eliminate the province's accumulated debt. Paying off the debt from its peak of \$22.7 billion in 1994 has reduced the annual debt servicing costs by \$1.4 billion over the last decade. (Finance)
- **reported** Alberta's strong 2004-2005 First Quarter fiscal position, detailing \$700 million in increased funding for health, additional funding for education and enhanced benefits for seniors. (Finance)
- **released** Alberta Finance's 2003-2004 Annual Report highlighting Alberta's tenth consecutive balanced budget, automobile insurance reform, the province's tax advantage and the ability of the Sustainability Fund to provide for BSE assistance, forest firefighting costs and natural gas rebates. (Finance)
- **approved** a new casino for the City of Camrose. The new casino will create more than 150 new jobs and reduce the waiting list for North-Central Alberta charities from 43 to 22 months. (Gaming)
- **represented** Alberta electricity consumers through the Utilities Consumer Advocate at Alberta Energy and Utility Board hearings. Achieved approximately \$53 million in rate reductions for consumers on distribution and regulated rates in collaboration with the Consumers Coalition of Alberta and the Public Institutional Consumers Association. (Government Services)
- **sold** 24 properties for a total value of \$14.6 million. These properties had been declared surplus to government requirements. (Infrastructure)
- **welcomed** top information technology firms and influential North American investors to the province for Innovation and Investment Week, September 21 to 28, 2004. This is the third annual week of events intended to assist local companies in attracting mentorship opportunities and capital investment. (Innovation and Science)
- **continued** to defend the province's forestry practices in response to U.S. softwood lumber trade action. On September 1, 2004, a North American Free Trade Agreement dispute resolution panel ruling ordered the United States International Trade Commission to reverse its decision that softwood lumber from Canada threatened economic harm to producers in the U.S. (IIR)
- **successfully challenged** federal legislation governing the way federally-regulated chartered banks disclose the cost of credit to consumers. An Agreement on Internal Trade dispute resolution panel ruled in Alberta's favour. The result will be a more level playing field between federally-regulated and provincially-regulated financial institutions, as well as greater consumer protection. (IIR)

- **unveiled** new equipment to ensure Alberta's crane and hoisting operator apprentices continue to receive technical training using leading-edge technology. Through innovative technology and contemporary training programs, Alberta is producing world-class certified tradespeople who are bolstering our province's appeal both nationally and internationally. (Learning)
- **released** the 2004-2005 First Quarter Update for the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. From income earned from April to June, the Heritage Fund contributed another \$328 million to Alberta's General Revenue Fund. The Heritage Fund is now forecast to earn \$954 million this year, up from the budgeted forecast of \$647 million (Revenue)
- **developed** a simplified process for calculating and claiming fuel tax rebates for geophysical contractors, oilwell drilling contractors, and petroleum producers. Discussions are continuing with other industries. (Revenue)
- **signed** a Provincial/Territorial Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Securities Regulation to improve securities regulation across Canada. The Ministers of Quebec, New Brunswick, Manitoba, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Yukon signed the Memorandum, and the Ministers from Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have agreed in principle to sign or present it to their cabinets for a decision this fall. The Memorandum includes a passport for securities regulation, resulting in a single window of access to capital markets in participating provinces and territories, more highly harmonized, streamlined and simplified laws, a Council of Ministers, a review of fees charged and a commitment to explore options for further reform. (Revenue)
- **amended** Weyerhaeuser's Forest Management Agreement to facilitate further economic development through the sale of its Grande Cache facility to C&C Wood Products, and reduced the annual allowable cut to allow for greater consideration of environmental values. (SRD)
- **facilitated** economic growth through the Alberta Tourism Recreational Leasing process, including the start of construction of the major Cougar Rock Development recreational tourism project west of Hinton. (SRD)
- **signed** a new agreement with the federal government allowing the targeted entry of temporary foreign workers to meet the urgent skilled labour needs of oilsands employers for key projects in Fort McMurray. (Learning)

## Improving Efficiency and Innovation

Albertans have worked hard to establish our province as a leader in technology and innovation.

In addition the government is constantly examining ways in which it can provide services to Albertans more efficiently. In this quarter, the government:

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- **provided** a \$1-million government grant to the Institute for Sustainable Energy, Environment and Economy (ISEEE), housed at the University of Calgary. The ISEEE, working in partnership with the University of Alberta, the University of Lethbridge, the Province of Alberta (through the Alberta Energy Research Institute), and the oil and gas industry, will provide leadership and coordination for developing and implementing new ideas, innovations and technologies to further harness Alberta's vast energy potential. (Energy)
- **continued** construction of Alberta SuperNet. As of September 30, 2004, construction to 360 of 402 communities in the Extended Area Network was completed. In the Base Area Network, fibre was placed between all 27 communities, providing the backbone for Alberta SuperNet. (Innovation and Science)
- **celebrated** the launch of the University of Calgary Grid Research Centre. Alberta-based researchers will use the Centre's research team to work closely with provincial and multinational partners to develop interoperable hardware and software. The Centre is a joint venture with the University of Calgary, Hewlett-Packard, Alberta Innovation and Science, and Western Economic Diversification Canada. (Innovation and Science)
- **supported** the international COMS (Commercialization of Micro and Nanotechnology Systems) 2004 conference in Edmonton. The conference was the largest ever and showcased Alberta's activities in this growing sector. (Innovation and Science)
- **unveiled** the plans and announced the construction of Calgary Courts Centre, a new state-of-the-art \$300-million courthouse that will ease overcrowding and eliminate the confusion of navigating five separate and aging court facilities. Calgarians and others in southern Alberta will benefit from a courthouse that consolidates the Court of Queen's Bench and the Provincial Court. The Calgary Courts Centre will be financed by government, but designed, built and operated by the private sector. (Infrastructure, Justice)
- **announced** plans for establishing a new leading-edge veterinary medical school that will put the province at the forefront of research into animal diseases and food supply safety. (Learning)
- **received** 270 applications to the \$13 million 2004 Municipal Sponsorship Program. To date, 45 grants totalling more than \$140,000 have been approved. The program offers grants for projects promoting innovation, excellence and cooperation in improving municipal government, administration and services to municipalities under 20,000. (Municipal Affairs)
- **received** 14 applications, totalling \$1.2 million, under the *ME first!* program. *ME first!* is a four-year, \$100-million program that allows Alberta municipalities to access interest-free loans for energy efficiency projects. Climate Change Central is assisting Municipal Affairs and Environment in the delivery of this program. (Municipal Affairs)
- **announced** that this year 100,000 recycled tires are being used to pave about 30 kilometres of road with asphalt rubber. The paving is part of a pilot project that has been underway since 2002 to determine if asphalt rubber is viable for use in paving Alberta highways. (Transportation)

## **PRESERVATION**

The following activities support the *Preservation* core business to ensure Alberta's communities are strong and safe, and Alberta's natural, cultural and historical resources are protected.

### **Building Stronger and Safer Communities**

Albertans take pride in their communities. They require leadership from government on issues of safety, and flexibility from government on determining what initiatives will best strengthen their communities. The government supports numerous initiatives that improve safety and build stronger communities. In the second quarter of 2004-05, the Alberta government:

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- **provided** a grant to the Child Friendly Calgary Society for a workshop designed to lead to the reduction of racism and discrimination, through improving communication, understanding, and mutual respect by fostering development of leadership skills, intercultural fun, and friendships. (AAND)
- **partnered** with the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office and Wal-Mart Canada to promote the importance of having working smoke alarms in the homes of Aboriginal communities. Three hundred smoke alarms were distributed to Aboriginal families throughout Alberta. (AAND)
- **supported** improvement in the quality of life in agricultural communities by funding 23 community-initiated projects (\$760,000) under the Agricultural Initiatives Grant Program. (AFRD)
- **awarded** \$33 million to 45 community-owned and operated projects under the Alberta 2005 Centennial Legacies Grant Program (Phase 3) across Alberta. The grant program helps municipalities, volunteer organizations, and the province make tangible, memorable investments for future generations. (Community Development)
- **issued** the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board's *Statistical Series (ST) 101: Sulphur Recovery and Sulphur Emissions at Alberta Sour Gas Plants*, which summarizes sulphur recovery results at grandfathered sour gas plants across Alberta. Overall, emissions from grandfathered plants have fallen by approximately 25 per cent due to improved performance and decreased sulphur throughput. (Energy and Utilities Board)
- **completed** new standards for landfills in May 2004. Standards were initiated to accommodate the transfer of authority for landfills from Health to Environment in 1996 and a request for comprehensive standards by Alberta municipalities in 1998. The standards are directed at environmental protection outcomes, including groundwater and surface water protection. (Environment)
- **organized** a scientific review and workshop on Wabamun Lake in July 2004 to discuss technical issues, results of studies conducted, and directions for future research of the lake. A report on the outcome of the scientific review is anticipated in late 2004. (Environment)

- **issued** 1,083 charitable gaming licences throughout the province. These fund-raising activities, such as casinos, bingos, raffles and pull tickets, support everything from minor league hockey to religious organizations, and promote community involvement throughout Alberta. (Gaming)
- **issued** more than 340 Community Facility Enhancement Program and Community Initiatives Program grants through the Alberta Lottery Fund. These grants support various projects throughout the province. (Gaming)
- **issued** consumer alerts to caution Albertans on unscrupulous businesses and provided consumer tips for dealing with marketplace situations such as travel clubs, retail sales and prepaid contracting for home renovations and repair. (Government Services)
- **completed** 396 investigations related to consumer protection and recovered more than \$116,600 for Alberta consumers. (Government Services)
- **issued** a booklet titled *Electricity and Natural Gas Contracts: What you should know before you sign a retail energy contract*, available on the Utilities Consumer Advocate web site. More than 4,000 copies of the booklet have been requested by Alberta consumers, libraries, and municipalities. (Government Services)
- **unveiled**, for the first time in Alberta, the LifeQuilt, a work of art that commemorates young Canadian workers killed or severely injured at work. (HRE)
- **implemented** the \$74-million Greater Edmonton Area Disaster Recovery Program to assist with the costs of uninsurable flood damage to homes and municipal infrastructure caused by a severe weather event in July 2004. Disaster assistance programs cover damage for which insurance is not readily available, such as overland flooding resulting from water entering through basement windows. (Municipal Affairs)
- **implemented** the \$1.4-million Kneehill County Disaster Recovery Program to assist with the cost of uninsurable flood damage caused by a severe weather event in June 2004. (Municipal Affairs)
- **approved** the \$470,000 Greater Calgary Area Disaster Recovery Program to assist with the costs of uninsurable flood damage to homes and municipal infrastructure caused by a severe weather event in July 2004. (Municipal Affairs)
- **announced** a special grant of \$12.5 million over five years to help the municipalities of Banff and Jasper address infrastructure needs resulting from their role as major service centres within the Rocky Mountain national parks. (Municipal Affairs)
- **held** the first joint municipal-provincial wildfire exercise in an urban setting (Canmore) to educate Albertans and co-ordinate wildfire response efforts. (SRD)
- **focused** on finding solutions to the increased use and production of methamphetamine through a two-day workshop in September. More than 300 people, many with first-hand experience in methamphetamine production, use and treatment, gathered to examine the nature and extent of the problem and how to best address it. (Solicitor General)
- **continued** support for an integral part of Alberta's youth justice system by providing \$325,000 in assistance to 109 youth justice committees. (Solicitor General)
- **renewed** funding to support safer communities. Alberta Solicitor General re-established the Alberta Community Crime Prevention Grant program and the Alberta Community Restorative Justice Grant program to support crime prevention initiatives of organizations and First Nations groups. (Solicitor General)
- **increased** the amount of financial support available to police-based and community victim services organizations. Annual grants allocated for programs that support victims of violent crimes increased to \$3.6 million from \$2 million. (Solicitor General)
- **continued** to provide support to the Integrated Response to Organized Crime (IROC) unit. In August, the IROC unit announced its first arrest. Six individuals were arrested and charged for their involvement in a drug trafficking and money-laundering scheme between Calgary and Barbados. (Solicitor General)
- **initiated** an update of electronic offender information systems that allows for the inclusion of more detailed information regarding illicit drug use by offenders in the months prior to their admission. (Solicitor General)

- **released and responded to** the McDermid report, *Saving Lives on Alberta's Roads: Report and Recommendations for Traffic Safety Collision Fatality and Injury Reduction Strategy*. The nine recommendations were accepted and the government has committed to a Cross Ministry Initiative and an Alberta Traffic Safety Plan to address the serious issue of collisions and the resulting fatalities and injuries on Alberta roads. (Transportation)
- **announced** a total of \$10 million in provincial funding through the Cities Special Transportation Grant for transportation infrastructure projects in Sherwood Park, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Leduc and Grande Prairie. (Transportation)
- **announced** funding of \$15.2 million for 31 projects across the province under the Infrastructure Canada-Alberta Program. The program improves urban and rural infrastructure, and this latest round of approvals includes \$3.2 million from the federal, provincial and municipal governments for the new Dow Centennial Centre, a cultural and recreational facility in Fort Saskatchewan. (Transportation)



## Protecting Alberta's Natural and Cultural Heritage

Albertans want Alberta's awe-inspiring natural beauty and rich cultural heritage preserved for future generations. In the second quarter, the Alberta government:

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- **launched** the countdown to Alberta's Centennial with a major event, "Ready, Set, Celebrate!" which was held on the steps of the Alberta Legislature on September 1, 2004. As part of this event, 100 Centennial Ambassadors were introduced and Alberta's official song was performed publicly for the first time. (Community Development)
- **initiated** a joint-acquisition between the Provincial Archives of Alberta and the University of Calgary from the now defunct *Alberta Report* publication. This significant collection contains more than 400,000 photos and provides an engaging view of Alberta community life. (Community Development)
- **established** Garner Orchid Fen Natural Area, west of Lac La Biche. The 166-hectare natural area has significant ecological value and adds a unique and special boreal forest site to Alberta's protected areas network. (Community Development)
- **promoted** the "Year of the Coal Miner" in Alberta. The Alberta communities of Lethbridge, Drumheller, Canmore, Crowsnest Pass, and the Elk Valley are all celebrating their coal-mining heritage in 2004. Since the last decades of the 1800s, coal has been the foundation of many communities and individual lives throughout Alberta. Today, coal is a high-tech industry that adheres to environmentally conscious development policies. (Energy)
- **participated** in International Joint Commission public consultation meetings in July 2004 to review a 1921 Order on the apportionment of water between the United States and Canada from the St. Mary and Milk Rivers. Public consultation sessions were held to provide information on the management and use of water, and to gather public feedback to determine if a review of the 1921 Order was required. (Environment)
- **released** *Alberta's Municipal Waste Action Plan* in September 2004, providing a map of activities to make progress to reducing municipal solid waste going to landfill from 750 to 500 kilograms per capita per year by 2010. (Environment)
- **provided** \$1 million from the Alberta Lottery Fund to develop existing parks, open spaces and facilities along an 88-kilometre trail in the Capital Region's river valley. The area stretches from Devon, through Edmonton, to Fort Saskatchewan and will become one of the world's largest urban parks systems. (Gaming)
- **provided** \$400,000 from the Alberta Lottery Fund to promote Alberta's Centennial celebration. In addition to wearing the Centennial logo on their jerseys, Alberta's two CFL football teams also promoted Alberta's Centennial through on-field advertising and during halftime shows. (Gaming, Community Development)
- **conducted** aerial and ground surveys along the Eastern Slopes of the Rockies to identify trees attacked by mountain pine beetles. Involved Albertans by informing them how to identify pine beetle damage and report any suspected cases. (SRD)





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