



ALBERTA LEARNING

The best learning system in the world

**Annual Report
2003/2004**

Alberta
LEARNING

Extracts from this report are available
on Alberta Learning's website on the Internet
at www.learning.gov.ab.ca/annualreport/

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1. Table of Contents

Alberta Learning Annual Report 2003/04

1. Table of Contents: Alberta Learning Annual Report 2003/04	Page 1
2. Preface	Page 2
3. Minister's Accountability Statement	Page 3
4. Minister's Message	Page 4
5. Management's Responsibility for Reporting.....	Page 5
6. Overview	Page 6
• Introduction	
• Highlights	
- Performance at a Glance	
- Key Accomplishments, 2003/04	
- Financial Highlights	
• Ministry of Learning Structure	
• Operational Overview: Ministry of Learning	
7. Results Analysis	Page 16
• Deputy Minister's Message	
• Auditor General's Report	
• Ministry Performance	
• Financial Results and Performance	
• Looking Ahead: Opportunities and Challenges for Alberta's Learning System	
8. Financial Information	Page 48
Audited Information	
• Ministry of Learning Consolidated Financial Statements	
• Department of Learning Financial Statements	
• Alberta School Foundation Fund Financial Statements	
Unaudited Information	
• Summary of Financial Information	
- Public Post-secondary Institutions, including Disclosure of Salaries and Benefits for President Positions	
- School Jurisdictions, including Disclosure of Salaries and Benefits for Superintendent Positions	
9. Other Information	Page 172
Audited Information	
• Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund Board Financial Statements	
Unaudited Information	
• Summary of Ministry Accomplishments, Alberta Learning Business Plan, 2003/04	
• Endnotes for Results Analysis	
- Endnote A: Notes on Surveys	
- Endnote B: Technical Note on Targets and Trendlines	
- Endnote C: Endnotes for Performance Measures	
• Statement of Remissions, Compromises and Write-offs	
• Statement of Guarantees and Indemnities	
10. Alphabetical List of Government Entities' Financial Statements.....	Page 217

2. Preface

Public Accounts 2003/04

The Public Accounts of Alberta are prepared in accordance with the *Financial Administration Act* and the *Government Accountability Act*. The Public Accounts consist of the annual report of the Government of Alberta and the annual reports of each of the 24 Ministries.

The annual report of the Government of Alberta released June 2004 contains the Minister of Finance's accountability statement, the consolidated financial statements of the Province and a comparison of the actual performance results to desired results set out in the government's business plan, including the *Measuring Up* report.

This annual report of the Ministry of Learning contains the Minister's accountability statement, the audited consolidated financial statements of the Ministry and a comparison of actual performance results to desired results set out in the Ministry business plan. This Ministry annual report also includes:

- **the financial statements of entities making up the Ministry including the Department of Learning and the Alberta School Foundation Fund for which the Minister is responsible;**
- **other financial information as required by the *Financial Administration Act* and *Government Accountability Act*, either as separate reports or as a part of the financial statements, to the extent that the Ministry has anything to report, and**

- **financial information relating to accountable organizations and trust funds which includes the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund, school authorities in the public education system (public and separate school boards and charter schools), the universities, technical institutes, public colleges and the Banff Centre for Continuing Education.**

3. Minister's Accountability Statement

The Ministry's Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 2004 was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Government Accountability Act* and the government's accounting policies. All of the government's policy decisions as at September 10, 2004 with material economic or fiscal implications of which I am aware have been considered in the preparation of this report.

[Original Signed by]
Dr. Lyle Oberg
Minister of Learning

4. Minister's Message

I am pleased to present Alberta Learning's 2003/04 Annual Report. The report highlights the department's strategies and outcomes that create an outstanding learning system for all Albertans.

This past year, the Government of Alberta released its 20-year strategic plan. Learning is integral to each of the plan's four pillars, which highlights the importance of our learning system in ensuring prosperity and high quality of life for Albertans. The *Leading in Learning* pillar in particular recognizes learning as a key driver of the success of Albertans and our province.

Alberta's Commission on Learning confirmed that the province already has an excellent basic education system, but that we must continue to build on our success to meet the changing needs of learners, society and the economy. Government responded by accepting the vast majority of the 95 recommendations, including class size guidelines and additional funding for hiring more teachers. Many of the commission's recommendations support work that was already underway within government and among school jurisdictions. The department is currently working with stakeholders to implement the recommendations that were accepted.

One of the department's important achievements this past year was the development of the second-language learning programs of study, implementation guides and resources. Beginning in 2006/07, Alberta students in grades four through nine will be required to study one of a variety of languages. Not only will learning a second language give Alberta students a competitive edge in the job market, it will help them develop their overall literacy skills.

In 2003/04, the department focused resources on the development of a daily physical activity initiative and the redevelopment of the social studies curriculum. Daily physical activity will be phased in over three years, and will increase student activity levels and healthy behaviours. The new social studies program will be launched in 2005, with an increased focus on Canadian and Alberta history, citizenship, and aboriginal culture and perspectives.

Another outstanding accomplishment this year was the proclamation of the *Post-secondary Learning Act, 2003*. This new legislation further supports the principles of Campus Alberta – enhancing a system that is accessible, flexible and responsive regardless of where a student chooses to learn. It defines the future of our post-secondary system, providing students with increased access to opportunities to complete degrees and greater flexibility for institutions to respond to student needs.

Our apprenticeship training programs play an increasingly important role in meeting the demands of the Alberta economy. In 2003/04, we responded to industry needs by providing additional funding to enhance programs and increase technical training classes to meet the need for skilled tradespeople.

In cooperation with the federal government, we launched two joint initiatives to attract more foreign students to Alberta and to extend existing measures to draw more skilled immigrants to the province. As well, the department worked with over 40 stakeholders to develop a strategic framework for integrating skilled immigrants into our economy.

Alberta continues to be recognized as a world leader because of the success of our learning system. This past year the department was invited to share our expertise with a number of European countries that are reviewing their education systems. We also continue to collaborate with countries that are using Alberta's expertise in apprenticeship and industry training to model their own programs.

Leading in Learning means providing Albertans with the opportunities they need to develop new knowledge and skills. Albertans know that in addition to helping them achieve their personal goals, education is important to the success of our province. Our continued commitment to having the best learning system in the world leaves us well positioned to meet the needs and expectations of Albertans.

[Original Signed by]
Dr. Lyle Oberg
Minister of Learning

5. Management's Responsibility for Reporting

The Ministry of Learning includes:

- the Alberta School Foundation Fund
- the Department of Learning

The executives of the individual entities within the Ministry have the primary responsibility and accountability for the respective entities.

Collectively, the executives ensure the Ministry complies with all relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

Ministry business plans, annual reports, performance results and the supporting management information are integral to the government's fiscal and business plans, annual report, quarterly reports and other financial and performance reporting.

Responsibility for the integrity and objectivity of the consolidated financial statements and performance results for the Ministry rests with the Minister of Learning. Under the direction of the Minister, I oversee the preparation of the Ministry's annual report, including consolidated financial statements and performance results. The consolidated financial statements and the performance results, of necessity, include amounts that are based on estimates and judgments. The consolidated financial statements are prepared in accordance with the government's stated accounting policies.

As Deputy Minister, in addition to program responsibilities, I establish and maintain the Ministry's financial administration and reporting functions. The Ministry maintains systems of financial management and internal control which give consideration to costs, benefits, and risks that are designed to:

- provide reasonable assurance that transactions are properly authorized, executed in accordance with prescribed legislation and regulations, and properly

recorded so as to maintain accountability of public money,

- provide information to manage and report on performance,
- safeguard the assets and properties of the Province under Ministry administration,
- provide Executive Council, Treasury Board, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Learning any information needed to fulfill their responsibilities, and
- facilitate preparation of Ministry business plans and annual reports required under the *Government Accountability Act*.

In fulfilling my responsibilities for the Ministry, I have relied, as necessary, on the executive of the individual entities within the Ministry.

[Original Signed by]

Maria David-Evans
Deputy Minister
Alberta Learning

6. Overview

Introduction

In 2003/04, Alberta Learning continued to build on its strong foundation to provide the best possible lifelong learning system for Alberta.

Alberta Learning's vision, mission, principles and values define the Ministry. Together, the Ministry's vision and mission present Alberta's view of the future for learning and how it will be realized. The principles identify the Ministry's approach to conducting its business, and the values demonstrate the beliefs or traits that guide Ministry actions.

In 2003/04, the Ministry's vision was renewed and restated while the mission, principles and values were re-confirmed.

Vision:

The best learning system in the world.

Mission:

Alberta Learning, through its leadership and work with stakeholders, ensures that learners are prepared for lifelong learning, work and citizenship so they are able to contribute to a democratic, knowledge-based and prosperous society.

Principles:

Learner Centred – The lifelong learning system is focused on the learner.

Accessible – Albertans have access to affordable, quality learning opportunities.

Collaborative – Learning is a lifelong human endeavor that best occurs when partners and stakeholders work together to provide a holistic approach and a supportive environment.

Accountable – The learning system is accountable to Albertans for quality results, system sustainability, and fiscal responsibility.

Responsive – The learning system is flexible and meets and anticipates learner needs.

Innovative – The learning system demonstrates leading edge innovation for improved results.

Equitable – Albertans have equitable access to lifelong learning opportunities.

Values:

Respect, Integrity, Trust, Openness and Caring.

The Ministry continues to play a key role in promoting Cross-ministry Initiatives. These are priorities established by the provincial government each year that transcend the mandate of individual Ministries. Alberta Learning contributed to government's priority policy initiatives:

- Health Sustainability Initiative
- Aboriginal Policy Initiative
- Economic Development Strategy
- Alberta Children and Youth Initiative.

The Ministry also contributed to the key administrative priorities:

- Alberta Corporate Service Centre (ACSC)
- Corporate Human Resource Development Strategy
- Corporate Information Management/ Information Technology Strategy
- Service Alberta Initiative.

The Ministry worked with our partners on a number of these Cross-ministry Initiatives, and in particular co-led work on the Economic Development Strategy and the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative.

In 2003/04, Alberta Learning maintained its emphasis on the achievement of results. To focus the learning system's efforts more effectively, the goals were consolidated from five to three in the 2003-06 Business Plan. The Ministry's performance and accomplishments are provided on the pages that follow, organized by the three goals of the 2003-06 Business Plan:

- High Quality Learning Opportunities for All
- Excellence in Learner Outcomes
- Highly Responsive and Responsible Ministry.

Ministry performance for 2003/04 is highlighted on page 7. Performance results are presented in more detail in the Results Analysis section starting on page 16, including factors affecting performance. The Ministry's accomplishments for the year are highlighted on pages 8-9 and summarized in Section 9, starting on page 192. Ministry spending is highlighted on page 10 and described in more detail starting on page 39.

Opportunities and challenges are discussed in Looking Ahead, starting on page 45.

Highlights: Performance at a Glance

2003/04 Ministry core measures performance is compared to results for the base year, which is over five years, or for new measures, the first year data are available. Results are summarized below and presented in more detail in the Results Analysis (pages 18-38). Targets are considered met if the result is within 95% of the target value, except for provincial achievement tests, whose targets are considered met if the result is within 0.4% of the target. The confidence interval is taken into account in assessing change over time on survey measures (see Endnotes A and B on pages 203-209 for a more detailed explanation of target assessment and use of confidence intervals). Unless otherwise noted, targets are for 2003/04.

Outcomes	Core Measures Results
Goal One: High Quality Learning Opportunities for All	
The learning system meets the needs of all learners, society, and the economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Public satisfaction with the overall quality of basic education increased to 71%. √ The percentage of recent apprenticeship graduates satisfied with their on-the-job training increased to 93%.* (Biennial survey last conducted in 2002/03.) √ The percentage of recent apprenticeship graduates satisfied with their technical training increased to 95%.* (Biennial survey last conducted in 2002/03.) √ 79% of recent post-secondary graduates are satisfied with the overall quality of their education.
All Albertans can participate in quality learning.	= A substantial majority (72%) of the public remains satisfied that most adults have access to the education or training they want.*
The learning system is affordable. Financial need is not a barrier to learners participating in learning opportunities.	↓ 50% of the public agrees that the learning system is within the means of most Albertans.
Goal Two: Excellence in Learner Outcomes	
Learners demonstrate high standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Overall results at the standard of excellence on provincial achievement tests reached 19.6% for all students and 21.7% for students writing. ↑ Overall results at the acceptable level on achievement tests for students writing improved over time, reaching 85.6% in 2002/03 (overall results in 2003/04 are not comparable to prior years). ↓ Overall results at the acceptable level on achievement tests for all students in grade declined from 77.6% 1999/2000 to 76.8% in 2002/03 (overall results in 2003/04 are not comparable to prior years). ↑ Students achieved provincial expectations on a larger portion of diploma examinations in 2002/03 and 2003/04 than in prior years.*
Learners complete programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ The high school completion rate within 5 years of entering grade 10 rose to 75%. √ The percentage of apprentices completing programs increased to 76%. ↓ A majority of Alberta post-secondary students complete their programs: 61% for universities and 59% for colleges and technical institutes.** √ High school completion of Alberta 25-34 year-olds remains high at 89%. √ The percentage of Alberta 25-34 year-olds who complete post-secondary programs increased to 57%.
Learners are well prepared for lifelong learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ The percentage of students who participated in Early Childhood Services programs prior to Grade 1 increased to 96%.** √ The percentage of the public who are satisfied that adult learners are well prepared for lifelong learning increased to 77%.
Learners are well prepared for employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ The employment rate of Alberta high school graduates aged 25-34 rose to 84%.* = The employment rate of Albertans aged 25-34 who completed post-secondary certificate/diploma programs remains high at 86%.* = The employment rate of Albertans aged 25-34 with a university degree is high and stable at 88%.*
Learners are well prepared for citizenship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Public satisfaction that high school students are well prepared for citizenship rose to 61%. √ The percentage of the public satisfied that adult learners are prepared for citizenship has increased to 66%.
Goal Three: Highly Responsive and Responsible Ministry	
Improved results through effective working relationships on Cross-ministry Initiatives and with stakeholders.	√ The percentage of cross-ministry partners and learning system stakeholders who agree that Alberta Learning staff are collaborative has increased to 89%.
The Ministry demonstrates leadership and continuous improvement.	√ The percentage of partners and stakeholders who agree that Alberta Learning staff are responsive and flexible has risen to 87%.

Target Met: √ Target Not Met or No Target: Improved results: ↑ No change: = Performance decline: ↓

* No target set for 2003/04. ** Proxy measure, no target set.

Highlights: Key Accomplishments

Goal 1: High Quality Learning Opportunities for All

- Introduced Bill 25, the *School Amendment Act* and Bill 26, the *Teaching Profession Amendment Act*, the government's response to recommendations of Alberta's Commission on Learning related to the teaching profession.
- Passed and proclaimed Bill 43, the *Post-secondary Learning Act 2003*, combining and updating the *Universities Act*, the *Colleges Act*, the *Technical Institutes Act* and the *Banff Centre Act*, to improve access to post-secondary degree opportunities.
- Completed consultations and established regulations for the Campus Alberta Quality Council, which will facilitate the development and expansion of degree-granting opportunities for learners.
- Accepted the vast majority of the 95 recommendations in the Alberta Commission on Learning report on the K-12 system, and developed implementation plans for the accepted recommendations.
- Enhanced on-line access to post-secondary education and created spaces for 692 more students at Alberta's post-secondary institutions in the fields of health sciences, Aboriginal teaching, and management, through a \$30 million increase to the Access Fund.
- In response to industry needs, provided \$20 million to post-secondary technical training providers to maintain an additional 5,780 apprenticeship spaces and enhance technical training equipment and facilities.
- In consultation with over 40 stakeholders, developed a strategic framework for integrating skilled immigrants into the Alberta economy.
- Added an additional 400 nominations for skilled immigrants to the Provincial Nominee Program, allowing Alberta to nominate a total of 800 candidates over the course of the agreement.
- Collaborated with representatives from Bermuda's government and industry to help them develop a national certification system based on Alberta's apprenticeship and industry training model.
- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Energy Skills Centre Trinidad and Tobago to formalize the relationship with Alberta Learning with respect to the development of industry standards and training and certification for worker mobility.
- Signed Memoranda of Understanding with Saxony (Germany), Denmark, Vietnam and China to assist in enhancing their learning systems.
- Launched a pilot project to fast-track the processing of study permit applications and attract more international students to Alberta.
- Implemented strategies to address the goals of the Renewed Vision for the K-12 Curriculum, focusing on areas relating to primary programs (K-3), daily physical activity, second language learning and Individualized Learning Career Pathways.
- Approved a new language initiative to make learning a second language a requirement for students in Grades 4 to 9. Beginning in 2006/07, Alberta students in Grades 4 to 9 will study one of Chinese, Cree, French, German, Japanese, Punjabi, Spanish or Ukrainian.
- Held consultations with over 400 stakeholders on the Daily Physical Activity Initiative, which will be phased in over 3 years to increase student activity levels and healthy behaviours, with mandatory implementation for Grades 1-9 in September 2005 and for high school in September 2006.
- Initiated a collaborative exchange relationship between Alberta and the state of Jalisco, Mexico to support second language learning.
- Redeveloped the social studies curriculum, with an increased focus on Canadian and Albertan history, citizenship, and First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures. The revised curriculum will be implemented beginning in 2005 with Kindergarten to Grade 3.
- Enhanced the web interface of the Science 9 e-text in response to feedback from teachers, students and parents.
- Trained 57 additional school teams and 88 coaches in using the Effective Behaviour Supports (EBS) process for a total of 249 school teams and 121 coaches since the introduction of EBS in 2001/02.
- Updated the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement Clearinghouse website with a series of new promising practices from school jurisdictions.
- Invested an additional \$20 million to support pre-school and Kindergarten children with special needs, to accommodate the increased number of students returning to complete or upgrade Grade 12 and to provide educational supports for students in institutional programs such as group homes and treatment centres for youth.
- Renewed a five-year Memorandum of Agreement with the five teacher preparation institutions in Alberta under the Memorandum of Agreement, deans confirm to the Minister that graduates have the required knowledge, skills and attributes for interim certification.
- Implemented Technology Standards and Solutions: established standards for videoconferencing.
- Developed the Content Delivery Device to support learning system use of LearnAlberta.ca.
- Began implementing outcomes and measures for the K-12 learning system as defined by the Review Committee on Outcomes in provincial surveys of parents, high school students, teachers and the public.
- Released high school dropout and returning rates to school jurisdictions and the public for the first time.
- Completed draft tests for field validation of the Grade 9 Integrated Occupational Program.
- In response to stakeholder expectations for a written component in all diploma examinations, re-designed the Mathematics and Science diploma examinations to include a separate written response portion.
- Began implementing a methodology to ensure diploma examinations are comparable from year to year, starting with Social Studies.
- Launched the Beyond MIRS (Management Information Reporting Schedules) Pilot Project with six school boards to assess the usefulness of grade level achievement data for program evaluation at the classroom, school, jurisdictional and provincial levels.

Goal 2: Excellence in Learner Outcomes

- Passed Bill 1, the *Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Act*, which sets the stage for a new program to encourage parents to open a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) for their children with a \$500 per child investment from government, as of January 1, 2005.
- Continued to infuse the Aboriginal perspective into English Language Arts, Health/CALM/Physical Education, Mathematics, and Science programs.
- Supported the implementation of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit School-Community Learning Environment Project with 16 pilot school jurisdictions to improve the success of FNMI learners attending provincial schools by increasing attendance, retention, achievement and high school completion.

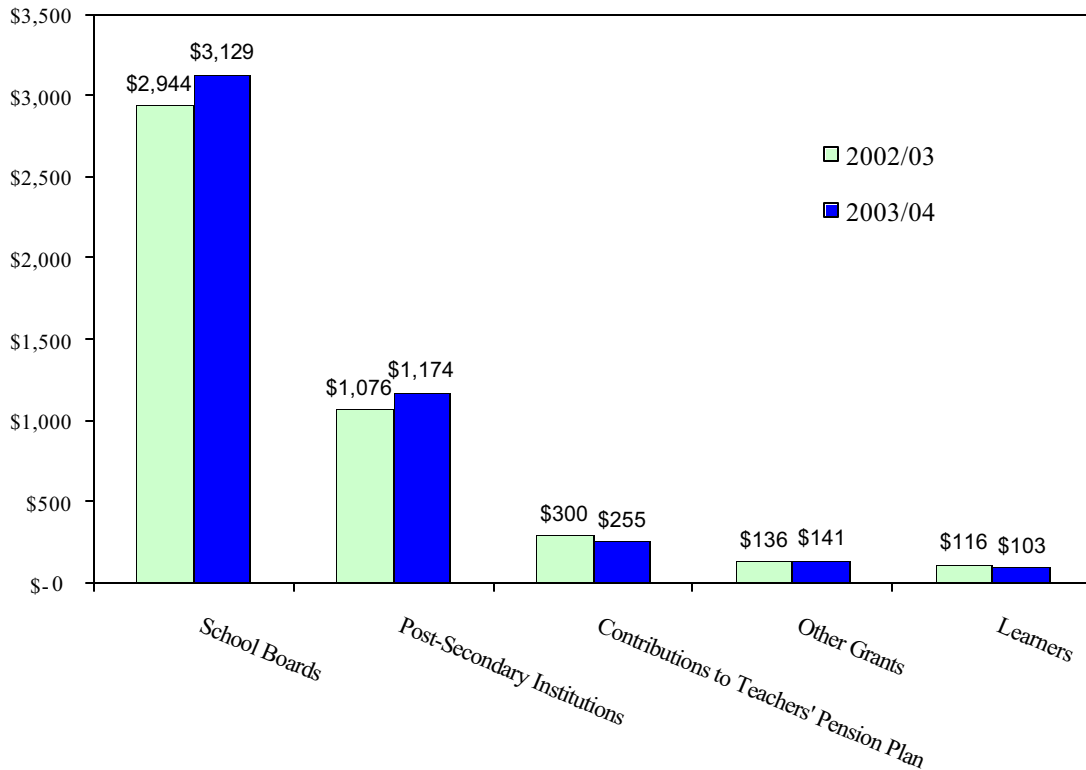
- Developed the Student Guide for Aboriginal People and the Guide for Counsellors and Educators and distributed them to more than 1,346 schools and counseling centers.
- Provided over \$22.2 million in scholarships from the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund to over 10,600 students, an increase of over 5% from the previous year.
- Issued over \$14.9 million in Achievement Scholarships to over 12,700 Alberta post-secondary students, an increase of over 10% from last year.
- Provided approximately \$84.4 million in loan relief benefits and completion payments to reduce student debt levels.
- Awarded \$10 million in Performance Envelope funding to 24 post-secondary institutions in recognition of outstanding performance in areas such as graduate employment and satisfaction, increasing accessibility, reducing administration expenditures and generating enterprise revenue.
- Established a new Tuition Fee Policy to ensure predictable and manageable tuition fee increases at post-secondary institutions.
- Completed 89% of the 66 recommendations identified in the three-year Special Education Review Implementation Plan.
- Recognized and rewarded 50 of Alberta's Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) students with \$1,000 Scholarships.
- Awarded Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Scholarships (valued at \$1,000 each) to 168 apprentices.
- Implemented an Apprenticeship Tuition Fee Policy and monitoring system to ensure that technical training costs are predictable and manageable for apprentices while at the same time maintaining high quality and up-to-date training.
- Generated 71% of Interprovincial Standards (Red Seal) examinations through the apprenticeship Interprovincial Computerized Examination Management System (ICEMS), which improves the efficiency of Red Seal trade examinations across Canada.
- Provided interprovincial mobility for tradespersons by issuing trade certificates with Red Seals to 3,828 completing apprentices, an increase of 5% over the previous year.
- Worked with learning stakeholders, industry and Aboriginal organizations to increase Aboriginal awareness and participation in the apprenticeship and industry training system. As of March 30, 2004 there were 688 registered Aboriginal apprentices.
- Signed an agreement with the Northwest Territories to provide evaluation services to individuals with international educational credentials.
- Supported community programs which helped 48,316 participants address a personal learning goal, or work to improve their basic literacy, English as a second language or employability skills through Community Adult Learning Councils and volunteer tutor adult literacy programs.
- Expanded access to learning opportunities in rural communities, through Community Adult Learning Council Initiatives, resulting in an additional 6,359 participants in 491 learning opportunities.
- Engaged over 6,500 parents and over 7,000 preschool children in family literacy activities through 53 projects of the Parent-Child Literacy Strategy.
- Developed the methodology for a high school to post-secondary transition rate as a new core measure for the 2004-07 Business Plan.

Goal 3: A Highly Responsive and Responsible Ministry

- Acted on the recommendations of Alberta's Commission on Learning by providing \$37 million for increases in funding for students with severe special needs, a return to credit-based funding for Grade 10 students, and other costs identified by the Commission.
- Led and supported activities to promote standardization, recognition and mobility of trades across Canada through the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA), Interprovincial Alliance of Apprenticeship Board Chairs (IPA), the Interprovincial Computerized Examinations Management System (ICEMS) and the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF).
- Consulted with stakeholders on the development of the funding profiles and the Accountability Pillar to set the stage for implementing the Renewed Funding Framework.
- Launched the Accountability Pillar for the K-12 system, including provincial surveys of school board members, Grade 4, 7 and 10 students and their parents and teachers. In total more than 270,000 surveys were distributed.
- Developed the Rutherford Scholarship measure for school jurisdictions as part of the Accountability Pillar.
- Supported government Cross-ministry Initiatives, providing a leadership role in the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative and the Economic Development Strategy and making value added contributions to the Health Sustainability Initiative, Aboriginal Policy Initiative, Service Alberta, Information Technology Strategy, Alberta Corporate Service Centre and the Human Resource Development Strategy.
- Worked with the Alberta Home and School Councils' Association (AHSCA) to raise parental awareness about planning for post-secondary studies.
- Processed over 144,000 applications for student loans, scholarships and loan relief payments, an increase of 15.7% applicants.
- Launched the inaugural year of the Student Funding Contact Centre in collaboration with Alberta Human Resources and Employment, to provide information and support about financial assistance programs for further education and training.
- Developed recommendations in collaboration with the federal government and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) for improvements to student financial assistance, promoting accessible and affordable post-secondary education.
- Worked in collaboration with other provincial and territorial ministries on the Pan-Canadian Online Learning Portal, which was officially launched by the CMEC. Approval was given by Ministers to fund further work on the portal.
- Led a collaborative initiative of the CMEC to develop a Pan-Canadian broadband connectivity plan and to introduce the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program as a replacement for the School Achievement Indicators Program.
- Provided \$30 million to post-secondary institutions in one-time operations and maintenance funds.
- Worked with industry partners and other government departments to forecast employment demand and supply in the trades.
- Started collaborations with the Construction Sector Council and other partners to develop construction supply and demand information regionally and across the country.
- Approved the cross-ministry *Policy Framework for Services for Children and Youth with Special and Complex Needs and their Families*. Provided cross-sector and ministry orientation sessions on the *Framework and Information Sharing Guideline* to over 400 participants.

Ministry Grants

(In millions)



Grants account for 94% of the Ministry's expenses and are categorized as follows:

Grants to School Boards include instruction grants, as well as support for Early Childhood Services, Student Health Initiative, and Provincial Initiatives, specifically the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement.

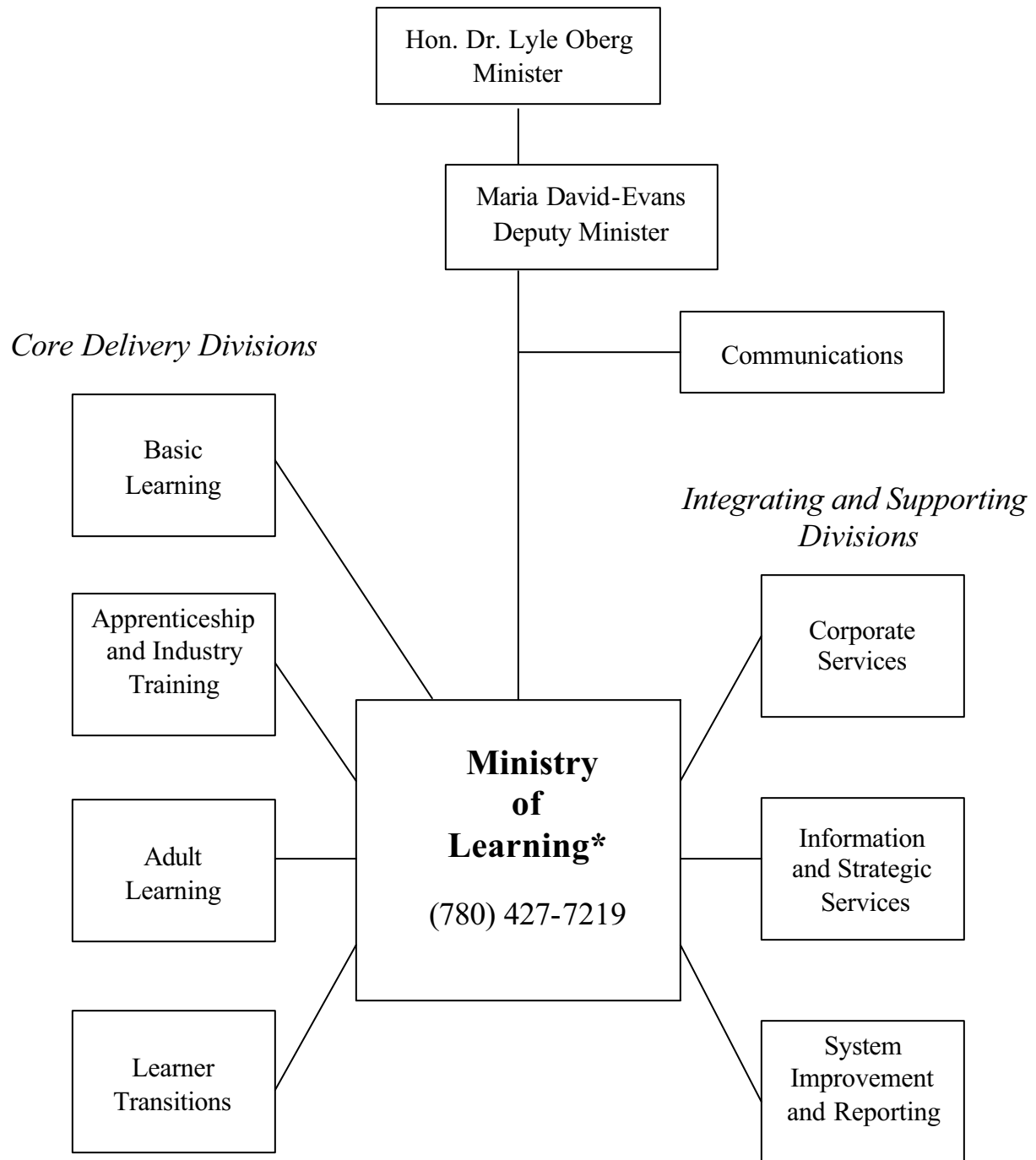
Support to Post-secondary Institutions includes operating grants and grants to improve the accessibility of post-secondary learning.

Contributions to the Teachers' Pension Plan include grants for both current and past service. These grants are lower this year due to a one-time pension contribution on behalf of teachers in 2002/03 towards the unfunded pension liability.

Other Grants include financial assistance to private schools for Early Childhood Services and Grades 1-12 instruction, as well as grants to other areas including community education and learning television.

Grants to Learners consist of funding to post-secondary students based on achievement and need, including scholarships and maintenance grants. As the Ministry implemented automatic remission for student loans, a reduction in the liability for student loans issued resulted in a reduction in overall costs.

Ministry of Learning Structure



*Includes:

- Department of Learning
- Alberta School Foundation Fund

Operational Overview: Ministry of Learning

The Ministry of Learning is comprised of two entities: the Alberta School Foundation Fund and the Department of Learning.

ALBERTA SCHOOL FOUNDATION FUND

The Alberta School Foundation Fund receives tax revenues from municipalities based on:

- the equalized assessment of real property in Alberta; and
- education mill rates established by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

These monies, along with those from provincial General Revenues, are allocated on a fair and equitable basis to school boards.

DEPARTMENT OF LEARNING

Learners are the central focus of the Ministry. Each year, about 750,000 Albertans, from preschoolers to seniors, access the learning system. In order to focus on their varied needs, the Ministry leads a learning system that continually adapts to learner circumstances. It allows learners to move easily between school and the workplace, between high school and post-secondary learning and among post-secondary institutions across the province.

Core Businesses

In 2003/04, the Ministry continued to support Alberta's learning system through three core businesses.

1. Basic learning

- Establish and evaluate curriculum standards
- Develop learning resources
- Certify teachers
- Support students with diverse needs
- Fund and support school authorities
- Approve and monitor schools and programs
- Conduct investigations and appeals

2. Apprenticeship and industry training

- Develop program standards with industry
- Counsel apprentices and employers
- Provide funding for approved programs

- Certify individuals in designated trades and occupations

3. Adult learning

- Fund post-secondary learning providers
- Provide student financial assistance to Albertans
- Coordinate and approve programs of study at public institutions
- License and accredit programs offered by private providers
- Fund, support and provide community adult learning opportunities
- Evaluate credentials of new Albertans for learning and employment opportunities
- Provide information to and support for the adult learning system

Ministry Division Descriptions

Reflecting core businesses, the Ministry of Learning is organized into core delivery divisions and integrating and supporting divisions. Each division provides specific expertise to the learning system. All divisions share responsibility for providing integrated service by partnering with one another, as well as with other Alberta ministries, school authorities, post-secondary institutions, adult learning providers, stakeholder organizations and industry. During 2003/04, the Learner Transitions sector was created from branches formerly part of other Alberta Learning divisions. This new sector was formed to focus on initiatives that support and promote successful transitions for learners within the learning system, and between the learning system and other areas.

Core Delivery Divisions

Alberta Learning's three core program divisions, Adult Learning, Apprenticeship and Industry Training, and Basic Learning, along with the Learner Transitions sector, provide learning services and standards for the learning system. The divisions and sector work closely with each other and with their partners in other ministries to ensure program continuity and smooth transitions for learners. Alberta Learning's core program

divisions and sector support the Ministry's core businesses.

Basic Learning Division works with the province's school authorities and early childhood services (ECS) operators to support learners up to Grade 12. This includes programs for preschool and school-age children that contribute to laying the foundation for lifelong learning for all Alberta's children. The division:

- develops and revises K-12 programs of study to ensure they are relevant and responsive in meeting the learning needs of Albertans;
- selects and develops learning and teaching resources that support effective and efficient classroom instruction;
- ensures that Alberta's teachers are certificated and equipped with the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to support students in meeting standards set by the Minister;
- works with school authorities to enhance, provide access to, and support the development and implementation of programs for students with diverse learning, linguistic, or cultural needs;
- develops and implements programs, policies, regulations and legislation that further the capacity of school authorities to meet the learning needs and learning choices of Albertans;
- monitors public, separate, francophone, charter and private school authority education plans and annual reports, and approves First Nations, private and charter schools; and
- conducts investigations, reviews and hearings to ensure an open, fair and effective learning system.

Phone: (780) 427-7484

Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AIT) Division works with industry, employer and employee organizations, technical training providers, government and ministry divisions to support the development, maintenance and

delivery of designated trade and occupation programs. These programs:

- contribute to the development of a trained and skilled workforce, which supports the economic progress of the province and its competitive role in the global market;
- respond to current technological advancements and workplace needs; and
- support labour mobility through continued development of interprovincial standards and certification programs.

AIT works with the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board, industry and others to ensure:

- high school and adult apprentices receive on-the-job training, work experience and technical training to acquire skills in designated trades;
- standards are developed in consultation with industry for technical training and industry examinations;
- technical training for apprentices is scheduled;
- long-term training needs are identified;
- institutions offer training in response to industry needs;
- records of apprentice contracts and their progress in the program are maintained; and
- the workplace is monitored for compliance with the *Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act* and regulations.

Phone: (780) 427-4601

Adult Learning Division works with adult learners, and public and private post-secondary institutions to support learners, provide learning opportunities and enhance the adult learning system. The division:

- provides funds to public institutions through operational and conditional funding;
- administers the delivery of federal and provincial student funding programs, providing information and issuing awards to students applying for loans, grants and bursaries;

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- encourages and rewards excellence through scholarships and awards;
 - approves programs and mandates for public post-secondary institutions;
 - facilitates course and program transfer agreements within the post-secondary system;
 - licenses vocational programs offered by private institutions and develops recommendations in response to requests from non-resident institutions seeking to offer degree programs in Alberta;
 - approves degree programs offered by private institutions;
 - provides planning, coordination and policy support to adult learning providers; and
 - provides information on the adult learning system to the public.

Phone: (780) 427-5607

Learner Transitions identifies, supports and promotes initiatives that remove or bridge barriers in the learning system to enable successful transitions for learners. The sector:

- leads and supports business plan goals that relate to the barrier-free movement of learners into, within and out of the Alberta learning system;
- provides learning opportunities through immigrant settlement, English as a Second Language, community adult learning and literacy programs;
- works with Alberta Learning stakeholders to increase awareness and participation of under-represented groups in the Alberta learning system;
- develops standards and guidelines for evaluation of foreign credentials, promotes best practices in foreign credential recognition, and provides high quality support and assessment services to new Albertans and potential foreign workers; and
- works collaboratively with other ministry partners to integrate, enhance, develop, implement and evaluate cross-ministry initiatives for children, youth and their families. **Phone: (780) 422-8911**

Integrating and Supporting Divisions

These divisions provide services that focus on Ministry-wide operations and facilitate integration and accountability across all divisions and the learning system.

Corporate Services Division fosters system and fiscal accountability. The division:

- provides guidelines on financial reporting and financial advisory services to Ministry-funded school authorities;
- manages the collection, critical evaluation and analysis of school authority budgets and audited financial statements;
- assists school authorities with their student transportation issues;
- funds school authorities;
- develops, produces and distributes learning resources;
- develops and implements the Ministry's human resource planning initiatives, policies and programs;
- develops budgets for the Ministry business plan, monitors budget compliance; and
- oversees Ministry administration, corporate records management, and financial and legal services.

Phone: (780) 427-2051

Information & Strategic Services (ISS)

Division provides ministry-wide policy options and policy research; planning and consultation processes; information management and technology services; and direction for effective use of technology throughout the learning system. The division:

- develops policy positions, options and responses; coordinates international education, immigration and federal/provincial policy; conducts research; and integrates policy direction across the Ministry;
- facilitates Ministry planning and decision making with planning, knowledge management, and risk management processes

and information. Provides consultation expertise and implements Ministry-wide consultations;

- in conjunction with business areas, facilitates effective and integrated use of information management and technology systems by the Ministry;
- provides and supports technical systems of the Ministry;
- issues High School and Equivalency Diplomas and official transcripts of courses and marks;
- through the corporate data warehouse, collects, manages and provides learning system information required by the Ministry;
- provides leadership and support for the implementation of evolving technologies in the learning system in conjunction with stakeholders; and
- designs, develops and delivers print and electronic learning resources to support program delivery in the learning system.

Phone: (780) 427-3663

E-mail: learning-systemwideplanning@learning.gov.ab.ca

System Improvement & Reporting (SIR)

Division facilitates continuous improvement and ensures accountability throughout the Ministry and learning system. The division:

- leads the development of accountability frameworks, performance indicators, measures and targets;
- reports Ministry results;
- conducts applied research, periodic audits or monitoring, and program evaluations;
- identifies best practices for achieving continuous improvement;
- develops and administers provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Examinations and provides individual, school, jurisdiction and provincial level results to support teaching and learning in the basic education system;
- coordinates Alberta's participation in national and international assessments; and
- administers General Education Development tests to adult learners.

Phone: (780) 422-1608

E-mail: measurement.learning@gov.ab.ca

In addition:

Communications works with the Ministry and its stakeholders to provide communications support related to Ministry work. The Branch:

- provides useful, timely and clear information to Albertans on achievements and initiatives in the learning system;
- supports the Ministry in reaching its goals by providing strategic communications advice, planning services, specialized writing and editing skills;
- facilitates effective communications among Ministry employees; and
- represents the Ministry to the public and the media.

Phone: (780) 427-2285

E-mail: comm.contact@gov.ab.ca