



THE FUTURE
MEETING PRIORITIES SHARING BENEFITS
Budget 2001

FIRST QUARTER ACTIVITY REPORT

2001-02

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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 First Quarter Activity Report covers April, May and June 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.

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LISTENING TO ALBERTANS

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

Through public consultation, surveys, letters, phone calls, e-mails and other ways, the government heard from the people of Alberta. It is through this input that many changes are initiated and new policies are put in place. In the 1st Quarter, the government heard from Albertans as it:

- **enacted** the Natural Gas Price Protection Act providing mechanisms for the government to introduce rebates when natural gas prices are higher than expected.
- **continued** with Alberta's Policing Review committee examining the provincial *Police Act*, governance and responsibility of policing, the role of the police and special constables, and other policing issues important to Albertans.
- **held** 18 meetings with over 200 farmers and another five meetings with over 300 accountants on the Farm Income Disaster Program.
- **held** eight focus groups as the MLA Low Income Review Committee consulted with Albertans on whether the low income programs offered by Alberta Human Resources & Employment are continuing to meet people's needs. The committee also issued a discussion paper and questionnaire.
- **held** meetings with seniors' stakeholder groups in Calgary and Edmonton to explain the impact of Budget 2001 on seniors' programs and informed them of the new cross ministry *Seniors Policy Initiative* that will develop a long-range plan for addressing the needs of an aging population.
- **initiated** a public consultation process for establishing new fire, building and plumbing codes. This process will allow Alberta to play a greater role in the national code development process and create better harmonization of code requirements across Canada.
- **commenced** analysis phase of the Gaming Licensing Policy Review. Information collected through formal stakeholder consultations, market research, and literature reviews will help develop recommendations for policies to address proposals related to the growth or expansion of gaming activities in Alberta.
- **initiated** stakeholder consultations on a new Alberta Responsible Gaming Program. The program, which builds on the success of the previous "Deal Us In" program, is designed for casino industry staff and VLT retailers to raise awareness of problem gambling and to equip staff to intervene and refer clients to services offered through AADAC.
- **began** the review of the *Persons with Developmental Disabilities Community Governance Act*.

- **recommended** that a study be conducted on the impacts of catch and release fishing on staging Bow River rainbow trout at the mouth of the Highwood River. This study involves an angler survey, mortality studies, radio tracking and population estimates.
- **held** public open houses on the update to the Castle Integrated Resource Plan, as well as public workshop sessions to develop an education strategy for the Castle Special Management Area.
- **held** follow-up consultation meetings on *Strengthening Relationships - The Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework* with the Metis Nation of Alberta Association, Zones 1, 2, 3 and 5, and with the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations.
- **released** the Committee on Lifelong Learning's *What We Heard* report outlining ideas on ways to encourage and enable adults to return to learning.
- **discussed** key issues and identified potential strategies at a coalbed methane workshop. Approximately 100 industry and regulatory representatives attended.
- **produced** and distributed a publication called *Moving Forward with Confidence* that explains the new cross ministry Seniors Policy Initiative.
- **released** the *Unified Family Court Task Force* final report after consulting with Albertans in-person, electronically and by mail. The task force recommended ways to improve access to the courts for those involved in the family court system.
- **continued** to work toward implementing a new disabled parking placard policy. Groups representing those with disabilities initiated the review of the current policy and continue to provide valuable input towards the new policy's implementation.
- **provided** advice and information on Alberta Registries and consumer issues to more than 48,000 Albertans through the Government Services toll-free call centre.
- **held** public meetings regarding cement plants' plans to switch from natural gas to coal.
- **continued** with the Alberta Early Childhood Development Strategy under the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative as a response to the Children's Forum, Task Force on Children at Risk and the First Ministers Accord on Early Childhood Development.
- **held** 13 tourism industry marketing workshops throughout the province to share marketing information and receive feedback on direction and programs from the Alberta tourism industry. Ninety-two percent of industry participants supported Travel Alberta's overall strategic direction and marketing plans.
- **began** planning and preparation for the upcoming Future Summit. The Summit is a public consultation process seeking input from Albertans to help chart a course for a debt-free Alberta and generate ideas for the government's business planning process.

STRENGTHENING THE ALBERTA ECONOMY

Albertans benefit from having a strong, healthy economy. This year, the government estimates that Alberta's economy will grow by 4.8 per cent and nearly 40,000 new jobs will be created.

This Quarter, many things occurred to demonstrate the continued strength of Alberta's economy. On May 19, the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund celebrated its 25th Anniversary. It is the largest investment fund of its kind in Canada and at the beginning of the Quarter, the fund was worth \$12.1 billion, representing about \$4,000 for each Albertan.

Conferences such as BIO 2001, the world's largest biotechnology conference, the Western Premiers Conference, or the Premier's mission to eastern Canada and the U.S. outlined Alberta's focus on continued economic growth in areas such as bioindustry and the energy sector.

Other actions this government took in the 1st Quarter to strengthen our economy include that it:

- **provided** the second installment of the Alberta Energy Tax Refund to more than 2 million Albertans. The second portion of the refund provided another \$345 million in energy assistance and helped Albertans deal with higher natural gas, fuel, and other energy costs.
- **implemented** the first stage of planned business tax cuts saving Alberta businesses \$286 million this year. This year's changes dropped the general business tax rate to 13.5 per cent from 15.5 per cent and lowered the manufacturing and processing rate to 13.5 per cent from 14.5 per cent. The small business tax rate dropped to five per cent from its rate of six per cent and there was an increase in the amount of income eligible for the small business tax rate to \$300,000 from \$200,000.
- **approved** more than 500 oil and gas wells and pipelines on public lands in the White Area (settled area) of the province. Each approval included criteria to minimize the impact on the natural resources of this land.
- **announced** \$10.29 per acre for provincial producers dealing with economic difficulties on Spring 2001 cultivated land and provided \$73 million in drought assistance announced for farmers suffering from a lack of moisture not seen in 130 years, i.e. \$4 per acre through the Native Forage component of the Farm Income Assistance Program and \$4 for honey producers per operational hive in 2001. In addition, \$20 million was allocated to the Alberta Farm Water Program to help farmers develop long-term, on-farm water supplies to help handle drought conditions.

- **completed** a study on how to attract intensive livestock operations to northern Alberta, as a way to diversify the northern agricultural base and add value to northern agricultural products.
- **distributed** \$4.5 million for 3,228 additional apprenticeship technical training spaces for 2001/2002 through the Apprenticeship Access Fund.
- **continued** the four-month rebate program for Alberta residents, farms and commercial and industrial businesses for natural gas, propane and heating fuel purchases. Total rebate program costs were estimated at \$1.1 billion.
- **launched** a two-year, \$9 million Americas tourism marketing campaign aimed at key U.S. and Canadian markets. A major objective of the Americas campaign is to continue to increase Alberta's share of U.S. tourist visitation.
- **facilitated** commercial loans to 27 agri-businesses resulting in \$8.3 million of new investment in the province and authorized 317 farm loans totalling \$38.7 million through the Agricultural Financial Services Corporation.
- **began** the development of the operation, management and administrative parameters for the First Nations Development Fund, created following the First Nations Gaming Policy announced in January 2001.
- **completed** risk hazard assessments and developed appropriate conditions to license American eel, big mouthed buffalo fish and tilapia for aquaculture in Alberta.
- **signed** 15 agreements with contractors to inspect 1,600 oil and gas well leases on White Area (settled area) public land. Information from the inspections will also assist in determining if the oil industry complies with regulations and meets contract conditions.
- **enhanced** Alberta/U.S. relations at the 2001 Montana Alberta Agriculture Opportunities Conference in Canmore, on long standing trade issues such as pesticide access and registration, harmonization of trucking regulations, animal health, country of origin labeling and grain marketing.
- **announced** a carry-over per gigajoule rebate program for greenhouses, irrigators and alfalfa dehydrating plants that use natural gas, propane or diesel fuel for pumping, dehydrating or dehumidifying.
- **completed** a new provincial regulation that establishes stronger ground rules for Internet sellers when dealing with Albertans. Alberta's Internet Sales Contract Regulation, to take effect on October 15, 2001, was also used as a basis for a national template that will standardize Internet sales legislation across Canada.
- **introduced** *The Electronic Transactions Act*. This Act removes barriers to e-commerce ensuring that Alberta's laws keep pace with the new economy. In the future, electronic signatures and records will be given the same legal status as their paper-based counterparts.
- **led** more than 50 Alberta companies to participate in the *Offshore Technology Conference*, one of the largest oil & gas shows in the world, in Houston, Texas. It is estimated Alberta companies sold \$2.7 million of oil/gas equipment and services and signed contracts for \$14 million at the conference.
- **released** the updated *Alberta's International Marketing Strategy*, detailing sectors of the economy of strategic importance to the province. It also establishes priorities and proposes activities for attracting foreign investment into the province and increasing Alberta's value-added exports.
- **announced** the opening of new locations for Alberta's international offices in Mexico City and Munich, Germany. The new offices will be co-located within the respective Canadian Embassy and Consulate, and will provide a more global and balanced presence for Alberta internationally.
- **opened** a new provincial Visitor Information Centre in Grande Prairie aimed at servicing visitors arriving from B.C., Alaska, and Yukon.
- **released** the *Personal Tax and Costs of Living Study*, which provides strong indicators to prospective investors, employers, and skilled workers that Alberta is a dynamic, affordable place to live and work.

PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Health care has consistently been one of Albertans' top priorities; because of this the Alberta Government continues to look for ways to improve the health system.

The six-point plan to protect and improve health care continues to be a focus of this government.

In the 1st Quarter of 2001-02 the government improved access to quality services, improved system management, enhanced quality of services, promoted wellness and prevention, fostered new ideas, and protected Albertans' publicly funded health system as it:

- **worked** with health authorities across the province to expand the Meningococcal Immunization Program province-wide to children and adults aged 2-24 years. By mid-June, about half the targeted 550,000 children and young adults had been immunized.
- **announced** the use of a newly-licensed vaccine to extend the province-wide Meningococcal Immunization Program to children 2-24 months for 2001-02. The vaccine offers long-lasting protection to Alberta's 90,000 infants and toddlers. The additional cost this fiscal year is \$10.9 million.
- **announced** an MLA review of ground ambulance services in Alberta, to examine funding and standards for services, using ambulance personnel effectively, and the possibility of essential workers designation. Recommendations are expected by year-end.
- **allocated** \$47.5 million to complete the Red Deer Regional Hospital redevelopment, bringing the total government commitment to \$95.5 million. The redevelopment includes 86 additional acute care beds, new critical care centre facilities, and new acute care support facilities in the existing building's third floor.
- **agreed** to provide over \$200,000 in one-time funding to cover the increase in malpractice insurance premiums for Alberta's 21 midwives. The grant will allow government-funded midwifery pilot projects to continue, and provide for establishing a midwives prenatal educational program focused on Aboriginal, immigrant, low-income women, and families.
- **provided** \$200 million in one-time transitional funding to Alberta's 17 regional health authorities and two provincial boards. The funding will help health authorities deal with the challenges of an aging and growing population, meet a higher demand for services, offset the higher cost of supplies and help address staffing issues, such as recruitment.
- **set** a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) target rate of 24 scans per thousand population, the highest in Canada. Alberta will reach the target when seven MRI units are up and running in the

fall, bringing the total to 15. The regional health authorities were provided \$3.2 million to contract additional capacity from private providers until the new machines are operational. This will allow the public health system to deliver 73,000 MRI scans per year.

- **established** the Alberta MRI Review Committee to appoint physician specialists who are reviewing previous cases of privately purchased MRI scans. The review determines if reimbursement is appropriate based on medical information and urgency. The department set aside funds to reimburse Albertans for urgent scans obtained privately.
- **announced** boundary changes, electoral districts, board sizes, candidate eligibility guidelines and campaign contribution rules for the October 2001 regional health authority board elections and subsequent appointments.
- **launched** SummerActive, a national community-based campaign to promote physical activity in Canada and launched the Ever Active Program to encourage students to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives.
- **set in motion** a plan for a comprehensive approach to water quality and quantity and developed and distributed a brochure to answer common questions about Alberta's drinking water quality.
- **met** with representatives of northern Regional Health Authorities and post-secondary educational institutions to identify ways to cooperate in recruiting nurses in northern Alberta.
- **initiated** meetings to assist First Nations regarding youth suicide intervention.
- **allocated** \$10 million of the 2001-02 Healthy Aging Partnership Initiative funds to assist in the development of seniors' supportive housing projects in 15 Regional Health Authorities.
- **passed** the *Traffic Safety Amendment Act* to fine tune the Traffic Safety Act. Highlights include the graduated driver licensing program, longer vehicle seizures for those caught driving while suspended and an automatic 24-hour suspension for suspected impaired drivers. The new regulations under the *Act* go into effect in 2002.
- **launched** the Live to Ride motorcycle safety awareness campaign aimed at new riders and other vehicle drivers.
- **formed** a Foot and Mouth Disease Task Team to aid with the province's general response plan for potential outbreaks of the disease.
- **began** construction on the new Colonel Belcher Care Centre for veterans in Calgary.

SUPPORTING EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

A new study on the accessibility of post-secondary schooling showed that most Alberta students believe post-secondary education is a good investment and this government agrees.

A quality education provides solid starting blocks for life and a foundation for the future. But this government doesn't believe education ends at a certain age or place. So, we support learning wherever it happens. This includes things like the Fish in Schools (FinS) program, where students from 24 schools throughout Alberta released rainbow trout that they had raised from eggs in their own classrooms into approved water bodies or the development and delivery of a science-based environmental education program to southwestern Alberta school groups at Beauvais Lake Provincial Park.

This Quarter, eight Alberta high school students were chosen to study at international colleges through scholarships honoring Dr. Grant MacEwan and over 400 of Alberta's finest teachers were nominated for Excellence in Teaching Awards, which awarded 22 teachers the special honour. These successes indicate the high quality of education in our province.

To continue this trend in the 1st Quarter, the provincial government supported initiatives that ensure Albertans will continue to be leaders in the new century as it:

- **distributed** 24,000 refurbished computers through the Computers for Schools program so Alberta students have extra resources to help them develop their technology skills.
- **presented** the first annual Grant MacEwan Author Awards. The winner of the \$25,000 author award was Fred Stenson of Calgary, for his novel "The Trade", and the winner of the \$10,000 Young Author Scholarship was Erin Knight of Edmonton, for her story "May Without Snow".
- **provided** the over 1,700 registrants of the Vitalize 2001 Annual Provincial Volunteer Conference with volunteer sector development sessions. In recognition of the International Year of Volunteers, six Volunteer Awards and a one-time Lifetime Achievement Award were presented.
- **began** work on a new education wing within the Royal Tyrrell Museum, funded through the Alberta 2005 Centennial Program. The \$2.5 million addition will add three classrooms and a laboratory to better meet the needs of school children.

- **developed** and **delivered** a grasslands presentation to raise awareness about the cumulative effects on the prairie landscape.
- **produced** publications on Aboriginal Organizations in Alberta, Metis Settlements and First Nations, and the Alberta First Nations population.
- **participated** in the establishment of the Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse to provide northern colleges with information regarding market employment demands and potential northern training opportunities.
- **funded** a number of projects under its *Northern LINKS Program*, intended to assist students with their decision-making in terms of attending post-secondary institutions.
- **celebrated** a World of Opportunity during Education Week, April 29 to May 5.
- **provided** youth from across Alberta, through a youth conference, “Career Craze 2001”, with an opportunity to make important career development discoveries and solid choices about their future. The focus was on trades and technology.
- **produced** new career resources to encourage and help young Albertans, aged 16-24, to research and compile relevant career, learning and employment information. The Alberta Youth Employment Strategy goals are to help youth make successful transitions from school to further learning and work, and being able to contribute and take full advantage of the province’s economic and social opportunities.
- **announced** new schools and upgrades throughout Alberta under the New Century Schools Plan – a \$1 billion dollar commitment to upgrade schools through modernization, build new schools and address increasing enrolment across the province.
- **planned** and **participated** with external partners, in the Alberta Social Work Education Summit.
- **developed** an Independent Study Guide module for Child Care Specialists to assist with assessing safety of outdoor play spaces attached to day cares.
- **provided** training to all Child and Family Services Authority subsidy assessors on “Understanding Self Employment”.
- **launched** the Alberta Library On-line (www.talonline.ca). This new web site is a virtual library catalogue enabling Albertans to search over the Internet most public and post-secondary library collections (over 25 million volumes) online.

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.

This Quarter, the focus of the government to provide support in this area was shown as the Ministry of Seniors received their “Seniors Friendly” designation from the Alberta Council on Aging. To qualify for designation, over 60 per cent of staff completed a course that sensitizes them to the physical challenges seniors face every day because of the aging process.

In addition, the provincial government joined with federal and territorial ministers responsible for aboriginal affairs and national aboriginal leaders as they committed to hold a national Aboriginal Youth Conference in Edmonton later this year.

The Alberta Government funds and encourages many other programs and initiatives that support children and families. This Quarter, it:

- **approved** funding to a Recovery Centre for children involved in prostitution. The centre, which is expected to open this fall, will provide a holistic treatment approach to females under 18 years of age involved in street prostitution.
- **played** a significant role in assisting those displaced from their homes and communities as a result of the Chisholm fire in late May. More than two hundred individuals who were evacuated from their homes registered with an evacuation centre established at Northern Lakes College in Slave Lake. Many of those individuals received food and lodging for the time they had to be away from their homes.
- **participated** in clean-up efforts in the aftermath of the Chisholm fire.
- **received** the one-millionth call on the Alberta Seniors Information Line, established in 1994.
- **approved** approximately 1,200 applications from seniors under the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program for a total expenditure of approximately \$2.4 million. Benefits ranged from \$100 to \$5,000; the average amount per benefit was \$2,000.
- **established** a new Family Law office in Edmonton. The new office will provide family law services to Albertans who qualify for Legal Aid assistance in areas including divorce, child welfare and custody disputes. It will also develop initiatives to respond to the special needs of family law clients, such as mediation and other alternative dispute resolution processes.

- **continued** to develop and provide interpretive programs for school children and families at heritage facilities. Through the recently developed web sites, the ministry has attracted large numbers of Canadian children and teens by its innovative and interactive approach to many of the presentations.
- **passed** the *Victims of Crime Amendment Act*. The amendments streamline the award process and focus resources on innocent victims of violent crime in Alberta. The unique program provides financial assistance to victims based on the severity of injuries suffered.
- **launched** the “Hooked for Life” fishing rod loaner program at the Sam Livingston Fish Hatchery in Calgary. This summer-long program provides an opportunity for beginner anglers to borrow fishing gear and tackle for a day or weekend at no cost. Novice anglers are also provided with enough instruction to get them started. By promoting fishing, the program also fosters stewardship of the aquatic environment and the province’s fisheries resources.
- **developed** urban fishing programs, a free fishing day, youth hunting licences to promote hunting to young people, and created mentorship programs for new hunters to encourage ethical and lawful behavior.
- **participated** in the Northern Distance Bachelor of Social Work Planning Circle to discuss employer requirements of a northern rural and Aboriginal social work curriculum for the Access Bachelor of Social Work.
- **hosted** two Alberta stakeholder meetings on child custody, support and access in conjunction with the Federal/Provincial/Territorial consultation on these issues. These meetings also provided a preliminary opportunity to discuss provincial laws regarding child custody and access with Alberta stakeholders.
- **initiated** review of *Child Welfare Act*.
- **initiated** a mobile community response team pilot to assist children, youth, and families in crisis.
- **supported** and assisted fifteen individuals to go through the process of seeking and obtaining personal and identifying information from their previous child welfare files and three individuals were reunited with their birth families.
- **funded** 14 Alberta parents/caregivers of someone affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) to attend the Prairie Northern FAS Conference 2001 in Saskatoon.
- **proclaimed** *The Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution (PCHIP) Amendment Act* to support the changes required within the new Act, funding to PCHIP programs was increased by \$10 million over the next three years.

BUILDING STRONGER, SAFER COMMUNITIES

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

This Quarter, at the Western Premiers' Conference, Premier Klein garnered support for a provincial network of sex offender registries. In addition, in recognition of its assistance with the Pine Lake tornado disaster, Alberta Transportation received a national award of merit from the National Transportation Week Association and a regional award of merit from the Northern Alberta Transportation Club.

In April, the tenth annual Crime Prevention Awards were presented to 12 recipients for their efforts to build strong, safer communities and a number of events were held to focus on community crime prevention initiatives.

These efforts acknowledge the government's efforts in building stronger and safer communities, and its continual search for new ideas and initiatives that build on this province's already strong foundation. During the 1st Quarter, the government:

- **provided** a total of \$914,000 to partnerships in the Calgary, central Peace, Grande Prairie, Athabasca-Boyle, and central Alberta regions. This funding enabled regional partners to explore opportunities to cooperate in a variety of areas including economic development and service delivery to citizens and businesses.
- **implemented** a disaster recovery program to provide financial assistance to municipalities in north-central Alberta that were devastated by extraordinary forest fires this spring.
- **recruited, trained and worked** with 31 youth workers in 14 different Aboriginal communities to provide programs based on the needs of youth, under the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation and Alberta's Future Leaders Program.
- **provided** over \$582,000 to bolster the efforts of 74 Alberta crime prevention projects. Non-profit organizations, associations and groups, community-based coalitions and networks, and non-profit professional organizations are eligible for the grants to support their community crime prevention initiatives.
- **issued** consumer alerts to caution Albertans on unscrupulous businesses and providing consumer tips for handling sales contracts in a variety of situations.

- **assisted** youth leaving child welfare by providing mentorship support to help youth make healthy lifestyle choices that in turn help build stronger and safe communities. Studies show that youth are less likely to commit crimes including violent crimes if they have mentorship from a safe and caring adult.
- **provided** \$170,000 in grants to Youth Justice Committees across Alberta. The funds are designated for administrative costs, including supplies, volunteer training and support, and the coordination of activities. Youth Justice Committees are made up entirely of volunteers and offer an alternative to the formal court process and the possibility of time in custody for certain young offenders.
- **received** preliminary approval to begin work on a “High Risk” Offender Registry. Under the proposal, certain offenders who pose a danger to the safety of Albertans would be required to register their addresses with police. The registry would work in concert with similar registries in other provinces to address this serious public safety issue.
- **reimplemented** the successful “Shifting Gears” program in partnership with local RCMP detachments in the Ghost/Waiparous area. Established last year, this program helps enforce the responsible enjoyment of recreational areas by campers and off-road vehicle enthusiasts, and promote a climate of environmental stewardship.
- **provided** funding to the Town of Cardston toward hiring of an Aboriginal Elder. The Elder will work with a Special Constable in the area of bylaw enforcement and with Aboriginal Youth in self-esteem building.
- **announced** the first 37 projects of the Infrastructure Canada-Alberta Program (ICAP). The projects total \$24 million for 31 communities across the province and almost two-thirds of the amount approved is directed to projects that improve or enhance community water and wastewater systems.

PROTECTING ALBERTA'S NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

When more than 10,000 participants take part in the 25th annual Highway Clean-up and participants from 369 clubs and non-profit community groups collect over 35,000 bags of garbage, enough to fill almost three Olympic-sized swimming pools, it's easy to see Albertans take pride in their beautiful, clean province. They also pride their uniquely western heritage and vibrant cultural diversity.

Albertans want to preserve the environment as well as the province's cultural mosaic that stretches across the province.

Involvement in activities ranging from one of the Provincial Museum of Alberta's most successful exhibits, *Anno Domini: Jesus Through the Centuries*, attended by more than 113,000 visitors, to the attendance at the Dunbow Re-Interment Ceremony led by First Nation and Metis elders from southern Alberta, confirms the government shares the same goals.

To ensure that natural places and special memories are preserved for generations to come, the Alberta Government performed the following activities during March, April and May of this year as it:

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- **expanded** The Wagner Natural Area, located west of Edmonton, to 541 acres (219 hectares) with the addition of 233 acres (94 hectares) to strengthen the vital marl pond waterway system of this habitat area. The addition of this land ensures the future protection of ecological systems of this natural area.
 - **conducted** inspections involving 7,092 recreational anglers — to increase public awareness and assure compliance of the new sportfishing regulations implemented on April 1, 2001.
 - **initiated** discussions with the Alberta Professional Outfitters Society and the Alberta Fish and Game Association to review the *Outfitter-Guide Policy* that includes a formal process for allocating the wildlife resource to the outfitted-hunting industry for 2003-2007.
 - **received** our third Voluntary Challenge and Registry (VCR Inc.) leadership award for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Emission reducing activities by government in 1999/2000 saved an estimated 7.75 million kilowatt hours of electricity and more than 1.12 million cubic metres of natural gas.

- **announced** new emission standards for coal-fired plants. All new developments or expansion of coal-fired power plants in Alberta require a lower amount of particulate, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides allowed into the atmosphere.
- **continued** discussions with the Tribal Chiefs Association regarding fish and wildlife management issues. Members of the northeastern Alberta association include aboriginal chiefs from Saddle Lake, Frog Lake, Cold Lake, Heart Lake, Goodfish Lake and Beaver Lake.
- **presented** a cheque for an additional \$1.5 million in funding to Climate Change Central during a news conference. The news conference also recognized the official opening of Climate Change Central's new and environmentally unique Calgary office.

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND INNOVATION

Alberta has many cutting-edge practices to thank for the sound economic position the province currently enjoys. Many were pioneered by Alberta business and industry. Others are the result of your government at work such as providing \$5 million in funding through iCORE (Informatics Circle of Research Excellence) to establish two research labs in nanotechnology and artificial intelligence at the University of Alberta.

In the 1st Quarter of the 2001-02 fiscal year, other work included that the government:

- **passed** new legislation to update and replace the *Insurance Act* that has been in effect since 1915. As part of the most comprehensive review and rewrite of provincial insurance legislation undertaken in any jurisdiction, the new Insurance Act will increase protection for policyholders in Alberta by increasing fines, implementing new rules for conduct, disclosure and governance.
- **reduced** municipalities' 2001 education property tax requisitions by at least 2.5 per cent and as much as 10 per cent in some cases compared to the previous year. Department officials continue to work with the Education Property Tax MLA Committee to develop long-term recommendations for Alberta's education property tax system.
- **announced** \$13.5 million in funding for year four of the Municipal Sponsorship Program. It encourages this province's approximately 300 small- and medium-sized municipalities to undertake projects that promote innovation, best practices and inter-municipal cooperation.
- **finalized** transfer of the Transportation and Utility Corridor Program for Calgary and Edmonton from Environment to ensure that issues of program and land planning, land acquisition and property management affecting the corridor can be addressed by one department.
- **established** a new online tool for farmers, ranchers, agribusiness, agri-retailers and landowners. As a result of a \$1 million research venture between the Alberta Research Council and BCL Landview Systems Inc., Edmonton, Landview On-Line™ is now available on the Internet (www.online.landview.com).
- **launched** a new web site for Community Development (www.cd.gov.ab.ca) that offers information about its diverse programs and services. The site is organized by the following community themes and areas of interest: *Helping Albertans, Enjoying Alberta, Building Strong Communities, Preserving Alberta, and Funding and Partnerships*.
- **worked** with Fisheries and Oceans Canada toward a memorandum of understanding on enforcement of fisheries habitat legislation.
- **established** pasture reinsurance to offset provincial exposure due to lack of rainfall and implemented a pasture insurance program on a pilot basis, using satellite imagery to determine insurance payments.
- **launched** Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development's website (www.aand.gov.ab.ca) to provide the public with access to information about the Ministry, Aboriginal issues and links,

and the NADC made the northern bursary applications available on-line.

- **launched** a new departmental website for Human Resources and Employment to provide clearer program and services information for Albertans, www.gov.ab.ca/hre. The site now includes downloadable application forms for the Alberta Child Health Benefit, an online listing of medical benefits for clients and information about the full range of AHRE programs and services. The number of hits this quarter increased by 400 per cent over the same period last year.
- **cooperated** with interdepartmental working groups in the development of adult residential care standards as part of the *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act* and in the development of a strategy to address the abuse of older adults.
- **launched** an external review of MLA eligibility for coverage under the Risk Management Fund to ensure that coverage provided to MLAs from all parties is fair and adequate, and that measures are in place to protect the best interests of Alberta taxpayers.
- **signed** three highway maintenance contracts for Calgary's Deerfoot Trail and seven contract maintenance areas (CMAs) in northern and northeastern Alberta. Due to re-engineering the maintenance and tendering processes in consultation with the industry, the Ministry expects to save 35 per cent on the Deerfoot Trail contract and 25 per cent on the northern contracts.
- **developed** the Early Childhood Development Strategy in partnership with all Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI) partners. Together, Ministries were able to maximize federal investment dollars by focusing on best practices and by decreasing overlap and duplication of programming through a more seamless programming structure.
- **developed** a proposal paper on regional child and youth committees to help communities streamline structures for child and youth programming. This aids in community capacity building by pooling resources in a more cross-collaborative and functional manner.
- **held** meetings with telecommunications companies in Helsinki, Finland to continue promotion of Alberta as a world leader in Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The focus of the Finland trip was research and investment into wireless technologies.
- **launched** the new Tourism Information System (TIS), which provides the most comprehensive source of information on Alberta tourism products available to Albertans and potential visitors to the province. The TIS database has been incorporated into the Travel Alberta website (www.travelalberta.com), and travel counselors can also access the information through a private industry website.

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