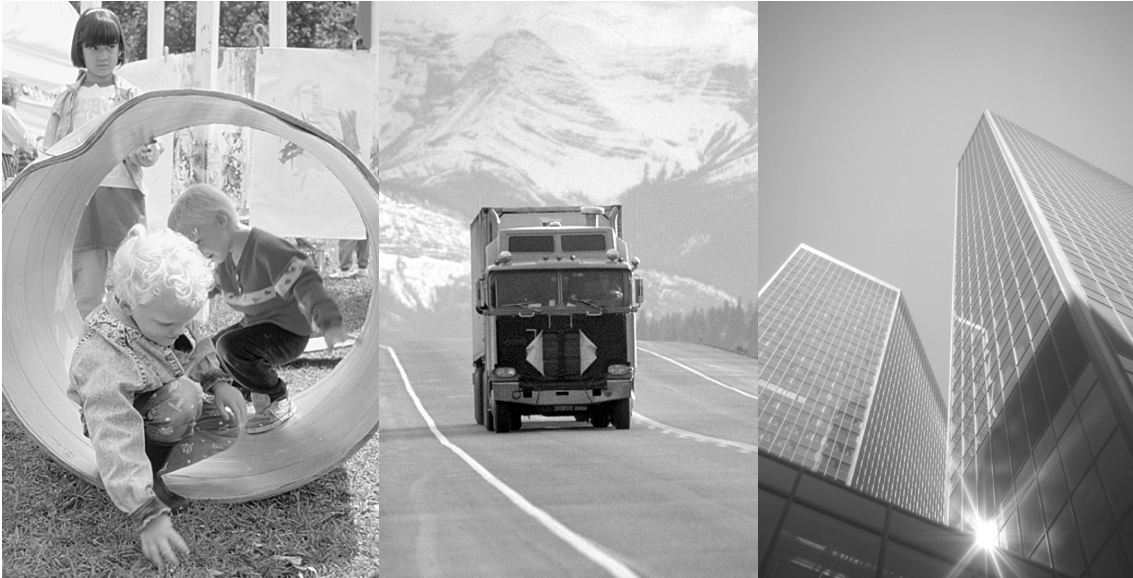


Alberta 2003 Budget

Making Alberta Even Better



FIRST QUARTER ACTIVITY REPORT

2003-04 QUARTERLY BUDGET REPORT

1

AUGUST 2003

Alberta
GOVERNMENT OF 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 quarterly Activity Reports is to show Albertans what activities the government undertook in the First 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 government receives from Albertans. Through public consultations, surveys, letters, phone calls, and e-mails. Albertans tell government what's important to them and what concerns them. In the First Quarter, Albertans had a say as government:

- **conducted** open houses in Rycroft, Grande Prairie, and Calgary to gain public feedback about local highway projects. (Transportation)
- **conducted**, through the Energy and Utilities Board (EUB), an audit of problem EPCOR/Aquila bills to determine the underlying causes of billing problems. The EUB continues to maintain a call center to handle customer disputes regarding the accuracy of EPCOR/Aquila bills. (Energy)
- **directed** the Advisory Council on Electricity to review, evaluate, and make recommendations on consumer concerns related to electricity bills. (Energy)
- **passed** the *Child Welfare Amendment Act, 2003*. The legislation is based on the outcomes of the *Child Welfare Act* review and emphasize the safety and well-being of children, finding permanent homes for children in government care, adoption, services for Aboriginal children and families, an expanded role for the Children's Advocate, and increased accountability for services delivered to children and families. (Children's Services)
- **evaluated** the Alberta Child Health Benefit program, which provides extensive premium-free health benefits coverage for children in low-income families. The review found that 99.5 per cent of clients are satisfied with the program. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **created** a provincial/industry task force to determine the short, medium, and long-term consequences of the border closure due to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). (Agriculture, Food and Rural Development)
- **honoured** the wishes of Albertans from seven communities by removing nearly 200 VLTs in accordance with these communities' plebiscite results. (Gaming)
- **consulted** bingo stakeholders on the policies by which bingo operates in Alberta. (Gaming)
- **introduced** a resolution in the Legislature proposing a constitutional amendment that would create an equal, elected and effective Senate. (International and Intergovernmental Relations)
- **consulted** with other western provinces and agreed to a package of reforms aimed at modernizing Confederation for the benefit of all Canadians. (International and Intergovernmental Relations)
- **solicited** feedback from members of the ethno-cultural community in Edmonton and Calgary on a proposed multicultural grant program. (Community Development)
- **hosted** open houses in Kananaskis and Calgary that highlighted events of 2002 and allowed public input on issues affecting Kananaskis Country. (Community Development)

- **held** consultations regarding park management plans that provided an opportunity for the public to find out about park management and ask questions of the local advisory committee members, resource people, and staff. (Community Development)
- **launched** a consultation process to improve the securities regulatory framework to ease access to capital markets and inspire investor confidence. (Revenue)
- **consulted** with stakeholders to develop regulations under the *Income and Employment Supports Act*. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **responded** to roughly 45,000 e-mails and telephone inquiries from workers and employers seeking information about their workplace rights and obligations. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **facilitated** an Aboriginal Focus Group workshop regarding *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)
- **organized and held** the *Challenge North Conference 2003 - Opportunities - Strategies - Success*. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)
- **provided** advice and information on registries, landlord-tenant matters and consumer issues to more than 40,000 Albertans through the Government Services toll-free call centre. (Government Services)
- **initiated** a public consultation with landowners and municipalities on the best way to care for unmarked or abandoned burial sites discovered in Alberta. (Government Services)
- **responded** to more than 45,000 calls through the Alberta Seniors Information Line. (Seniors)
- **assisted** more than 15,000 seniors, an 87 per cent increase over the previous year, through the eight regional Seniors Information Services Offices. (Seniors)
- **collected** feedback on the draft of *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*. (Environment)
- **held** a workshop to review details on the mandatory greenhouse gas reporting system being developed for major industrial emitters in the province. (Environment)
- **invited** stakeholder input regarding angling regulation proposals for five lakes in the Rocky Mountain House area. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **changed** angling regulations to provide balanced opportunities to harvest walleye in an additional 16 lakes, in response to requests from Albertans. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **received** recommendations for the Pigeon Lake Fisheries Management Plan, following extensive public consultations. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **met** with the Tribal Chiefs Peacekeeping Conservation Commission to address First Nations concerns. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **investigated** Albertans' awareness of the province's film classification system and public film viewing and media consumption habits through focus groups involving adults and youth. (Community Development)
- **announced** the new funding formula for the Lodge Assistance Program that will target funding to low and moderate-income seniors in provincially supported lodges and provide an additional subsidy to small lodges of 33 units or less. (Seniors)

PEOPLE

The following activities support the *People* core business and particularly areas that Albertans have identified as priority areas 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 First Quarter, the government continued to focus on the health of Albertans as it:

-
- **announced** the Health Sustainability Fund, which will provide \$59 million to health authorities in the province over three years. The fund will support health facility conversions from acute care to long-term care or designated assisted living, new service delivery models, mental health services integration, and the realignment of regional services. (Infrastructure)
 - **participated** in the Calgary Health Region's South Diagnostic and Treatment Centre announcement. Construction for the project is underway and includes a facility to be built on the north side - the North Diagnostic and Treatment Centre. The total government support for both facilities is \$20 million. (Infrastructure)
 - **launched** the West Nile virus response plan for 2003 under the direction of the Provincial Health Office. (Health and Wellness; Sustainable Resource Development; Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Environment)
 - **committed** \$10 million toward Alberta's Diabetes Strategy, which will provide financial assistance to low-income Albertans with diabetes to help them purchase the supplies they need to manage their disease. Funding will also educate the public on preventing diabetes and screen Aboriginal people living off-reserve for diabetes. (Health and Wellness)
 - **announced** an increase of close to a half-billion dollars to ensure access to services and to implement reforms that build a better public health care system. (Health and Wellness)
 - **boosted** primary health care service funding through the Alberta Primary Health Care Capacity-Building Fund. Close to \$16 million in funding was earmarked for a range of new programs designed to expand primary health care services in Alberta. (Health and Wellness)
 - **provided** an additional \$21.5 million for hospitals and other regional health authority buildings to address increasing operation and maintenance costs. (Health and Wellness)
 - **extended** the Alberta Adult Health Benefit (AAHB) to people who leave Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) because of an indexed increase to their Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits. Both programs provide the same health coverage. (Human Resources and Employment)
 - **announced** funding of \$220 million to build Health Research Innovation Centres at the Universities of Calgary and Alberta, enhancing the province's medical research capabilities and helping attract top research professionals. (Infrastructure)

- **implemented** the *Traffic Safety Act*, which introduces new initiatives to make Alberta's roads safer, such as Graduated Driver Licensing. (Transportation)
- **launched** *Partners in Road Construction Safety*, a campaign aimed at getting motorists to be more cautious when traveling through construction zones. (Transportation)
- **launched** *Summer Active*, a national six-week community-based awareness campaign promoting physical activity. (Community Development)
- **highlighted** the wide-ranging effects a brain injury can have on survivors, families, communities and others during Brain Injury Awareness Week. (Community Development)
- **passed** the *Tobacco Tax Amendment Act*, supporting the Tobacco Reduction Strategy by placing new restrictions on the purchase of duty free tobacco products. (Revenue)
- **participated** with health regions and post-secondary institutions to plan a pilot health care practicum placement program, and to discuss potential joint recruitment and educational activities. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)
- **launched** a new bursary program for medical students that will help recruit physicians to Northern Alberta. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)
- **communicated** Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) information and monitored suspected cases. (Health and Wellness)
- **sent** the Healthy U campaign crew on the road to participate in summer rodeos and festivals, encouraging Albertans to eat healthy and be physically active. (Health and Wellness)
- **distributed** posters addressing seniors gambling issues and where seniors can go for information and support. (Seniors)
- **established** the Air Quality Index, which provides Albertans with more accurate and timely information about air quality in their communities. According to the index, Alberta's air quality was rated "Good" more than 95 per cent of the time in 2002. (Environment)
- **revised** the protocol for failed bacteriological results in drinking water for approved waterworks systems to allow for more accurate testing and a quicker response to failed bacterial results in drinking water. (Environment; Health and Wellness)
- **assisted** with the Treaty 8 Fish Contaminant Study, aimed at investigating fish consumption guidelines for several lakes in Northern Alberta. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **awarded** the 2007 Western Canada Summer Games to Strathcona County. The games will involve some 2,400 participants, plus families and spectators. (Community 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 First Quarter, the provincial government honoured its commitment to education and lifelong learning as it:

- **invested**, through Budget 2003, \$5 billion in Alberta's education system, resulting in spending increases in the basic and post-secondary learning systems. (Learning)
- **took part** in the official opening/dedication of five new schools: École La Source, Calgary; École Beausejour, Plamondon; Bearspaw Elementary/Middle School, Calgary; and St. Gabriel The Archangel Elementary/Junior High School and Prairie Waters School, Chestermere. (Infrastructure)
- **took part** in sod turning/site blessing ceremonies for four learning facility projects: Archbishop Oscar Romero Catholic School, Edmonton; Trillium Centre, Sherwood Park; St. Dominic School, Rocky Mountain House; and Archbishop Joseph MacNeil School. (Infrastructure)
- **announced** an additional \$30 million to be provided to school boards across Alberta to assist with the increased costs of operating and maintaining their facilities. (Infrastructure)
- **completed** an operational review of Edmonton Public Schools to recommend ways the Board could significantly reduce its deficit without jeopardizing student learning. (Learning)
- **awarded** \$520,000 in scholarships to Alberta's top graduate students through Ralph A. Steinhauer Awards of Distinction, Sir James Lougheed Awards of Distinction and Arts Graduate Scholarships. (Learning)
- **provided** an additional \$1 million to continue the work of the Rainbow Spirit Project aimed at improving the school experience for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Edmonton Catholic Schools. (Learning)
- **allocated** \$25 million to create post-secondary educational spaces in the areas of health sciences, Aboriginal teaching, management, and apprenticeship training, and expand technology and innovation. (Learning)
- **provided** \$30 million to post-secondary institutions to reduce financial pressures of increased operations and maintenance costs. (Learning)
- **began** the inclusive libraries initiative pilot project that places special technology into public libraries to help persons with disabilities access information on-line. (Community Development)

- **provided**, through Northern LINKS, \$304,000 to encourage Northern Alberta students to complete their schooling and pursue post-secondary education. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)
- **awarded** more than \$360,000 in bursaries, co-sponsored by business and community partners, to 147 students. A further 119 NADC bursaries were awarded to students for the 2003-04 academic year. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)
- **released** the second province-wide class sizes survey, which shows that class sizes in Alberta's elementary schools have remained almost the same as last year and that Grades 7 - 9 math, language, social studies and science classes averaged 25.5 students. (Learning)
- **showcased** Alberta's learning system through Education Week and highlighted the unique learning choices and opportunities available in provincial schools. (Learning)
- **celebrated** the outstanding, innovative, and creative teaching practices of the 21 Alberta teachers who were awarded the 2003 Excellence in Teaching Award. Recipients were chosen from more than 400 nominations. (Learning)
- **introduced** the *Post-secondary Learning Act, 2003* to support a seamless post-secondary education system that benefits students through increased access to degree completion opportunities and offers greater flexibility for institutions to respond to student needs. (Learning)
- **co-ordinated** a session for 50 high school counsellors in Edmonton to provide updates on post-secondary funding options and the Skills Development Program; also provided information about services, resources and initiatives by Human Resources and Employment for high school students. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **recognized** eight outstanding high-school students for their dedication to education and the community through United World Colleges Scholarships. The program promotes international understanding and peace through education and shared experience. (Learning)
- **met** with representatives from Bermuda's government and industry to finalize plans to adopt Alberta's apprenticeship and training model to meet their country's needs. (Learning)
- **granted** the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology occupancy of the ATCO Tyrrell Learning Centre, where the museum delivered its first educational programs. Plans are under way to expand educational programs about Alberta's dinosaurs and ancient history. (Community Development)
- **celebrated** 20 years of educational programming at the Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre with a public ceremony and open house. (Community Development)
- **presented** the Grant MacEwan Literary Award to Ronald LaJeunesse of Edmonton for *Political Asylums*, and the Grant MacEwan Young Writer's Scholarships of \$2,500 each to four young Albertans. (Community Development)
- **established** a centralized Student Funding Contact Centre (SFCC), which is anticipated to respond to approximately 100,000 inquiries from students, institutions, and staff who have questions about student funding. (Human Resources and Employment, Learning)
- **provided** information relating to funding, careers, and career planning to 40,637 individuals through the Career Information Hotline and Student Funding Contact Centre. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **partnered** with Blood Tribe Employment and Skills Training to provide 16 aboriginal students with Personal Care Attendant training. This program helps meet a need for personal care attendants in the community. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **hosted** 25 post-secondary students from Quebec via the Quebec/Alberta Exchange. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **introduced** *Making Sense of Labour Market Information*, which explains how everyday information sources such as news, the Internet, magazines, and conversations can help plot career, learning, or employment paths. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **published and distributed** *A Guide to Aboriginal Organizations in Alberta; Profiles: Métis Settlements and First Nations*; and the *Indian Register Population Profile*. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)

- **supported** Environment Week and educational activities held around the province. Activities included a Clean Air Day in Edson, the Enviro-Fair in Peace River, and the Red Deer River Cleanup. The activities provided hands-on educational opportunities to learn more about environmental protection and resource management in Alberta. (Environment)
- **invited** Grade 5 students who won the Environment Minister for a Day contest to Edmonton. The contest helped create a greater understanding of government and the environment among students, their classmates, and their families. (Environment)
- **provided** fish and wildlife information to more than 3,500 members of the public through school talks, public consultations, and trade fairs. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **presented** *Wild Thing*, an environmental education event held in Calgary at the Sam Livingston Fish Hatchery and the Bow Habitat Station. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **provided** learning opportunities to students at 22 Alberta schools through the Fish in Schools program, and presented the Swamp Bugs and Cattails program to 65 school groups at the Bow Habitat Station in Calgary. (Sustainable Resource Development)

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:

- **introduced** the *Family Law Act*, which consolidates and updates provincial family law and addresses such areas as spousal and adult interdependent partner support, child support, guardianship, and parenting. (Justice and Attorney General)
- **passed** the *Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act*, through which distinct and separate legislation for children with disabilities and their families will be provided. The Act will provide proactive and family-centred services and supports that will preserve, strengthen, and empower families of children with disabilities. (Children's Services)
- **gathered** approximately 1,000 stakeholders to participate in Uniting for Children 2003 forum. With the theme *Listen - Commit - Act*, the forum was an opportunity to present current research on issues facing children. (Children's Services)
- **launched** Alberta's Promise, a non-profit entity to encourage and recognize co-operation among the corporate sector, communities, not-for-profit organizations and governments to increase resources for programs benefiting children and youth. (Children's Services)
- **received and investigated** approximately 125 allegations of abuse of persons in care. Received more than 450 calls to the Protection for Persons in Care reporting line for information or referrals, and mailed more than 6,000 Protection for Persons in Care brochures and 250 posters. (Community Development)
- **provided** \$300,000 in assistance to 102 Alberta youth justice committees. These volunteers work with the justice system to help rehabilitate young offenders. (Solicitor General)
- **unlocked** pension funds for those facing financial hardship. (Finance)
- **gave** royal assent to the *Income and Employment Supports Act*, which provides the legislative authority for programs that help low-income Albertans meet basic needs required for health and well being and that provide training and other measures to help them become and stay independent. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **provided** approximately \$12.3 million in grants to support the housing needs of low-income families, seniors, and people with special needs. (Seniors)
- **amended** regulations to align the eligibility criteria under the *Social Development Act* and the *Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Act* with the requirements under the new *Adult Interdependent Relationships Act*. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **created** a program to help workers laid off due to the BSE incident during their two-week waiting period for Employment Insurance benefits. (Human Resources and Employment)

- **introduced** amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* to ensure that dependent children of deceased workers continue to receive pension benefits. The Act applies specifically to cases where a deceased worker's dependent children do not live with the worker's surviving spouse or adult interdependent partner. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **provided** \$261,000 to 62 Home Adaptation Program applicants to assist homeowners and tenants in completing modifications to improve wheelchair access and mobility. (Seniors)
- **processed** over 3,200 new applications under the Alberta Seniors Benefit Program. (Seniors)
- **paid** approximately \$39 million to more than 125,000 seniors under the Alberta Seniors Benefit program. Average monthly cash benefit was \$103 per senior. (Seniors)
- **provided** approximately \$7.8 million in funding to support 16 homeless shelters. (Seniors)
- **approved** approximately 10,600 applications from lower-income seniors under the Special Needs Assistance for Seniors program for a total of approximately \$8.5 million. (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 2003-2004 and various government ministries are involved in a number of initiatives to ensure that trend continues. In this Quarter, the government:

- **presented** a balanced Budget 2003 that invests in health, education, infrastructure and transportation. Budget 2003 establishes a Capital Account to fund Alberta's infrastructure projects and a Sustainability Fund that ensures predictable use of resource revenues for the future. (Finance)
- **announced** a \$5.5 billion investment over three years to modernize, preserve, and begin constructing new health facilities, schools, post-secondary facilities, roads, and other infrastructure projects as part of the Centennial Capital Plan, unveiled in Budget 2003. (Infrastructure and Transportation)
- **reduced** the general corporate income tax rate to 12.5 per cent, the small business rate to four per cent and increased the small business tax exemption level to \$400,000. With cuts to corporate income taxes started in 2001, Alberta businesses will save \$435 million this year. (Revenue)
- **facilitated** the provision of \$94 million to help publicly supported facilities - such as schools, post-secondary institutions, seniors' housing, and hospitals - with operations and maintenance costs. (Finance)
- **released** the 2002-03 Government of Alberta Annual Report highlighting the province's ninth-consecutive balanced budget that allocates surpluses to debt repayment, the Capital Account, and the new Sustainability Fund. (Finance)
- **defended** Alberta's forestry practices in response to U.S. softwood lumber trade action and participated in Canada's North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and World Trade Organization (WTO) challenges related to the softwood lumber dispute. (International and Intergovernmental Relations)
- **released** the \$628 million highway construction program for 2003-04. (Transportation)
- **represented** Alberta's interests to the Canadian federal government, U.S. government officials, and WTO officials on issues such as free trade negotiations, tariff reductions, the U.S. Farm Bill, wheat exports to the U.S., margarine production, BSE and other issues. (International and Intergovernmental Relations)
- **announced** joint funding of \$300 million for ring road projects in Calgary and Edmonton with the federal government. These projects will help move goods and people more efficiently in and around Alberta's largest cities and reduce congestion. (Transportation)
- **promoted** the safety of Alberta's beef industry and pressed the U.S. to open its border to Alberta beef through meetings between Premier Klein and Vice President Dick Cheney, and between Alberta and Montana legislators and business people. (International and Intergovernmental Relations, Economic Development)

- **discussed** such issues as energy policy, country-of-origin labelling for food products, softwood lumber, border security, and Alberta's role in the rebuilding of Iraq with the U.S. government, met with the President's Council of Economic Advisors, and participated in a panel discussion about energy policy at a conference sponsored by the Council for National Policy. (Economic Development)
- **proclaimed** the *Electric Utilities Act* amendments, which refine the regulatory framework, strengthen competition in the retail market, align electricity and natural gas marketing, and ensure a more level playing field and efficient oversight of regulated services. (Energy)
- **issued** the Energy and Utilities Board annual report, providing information on the state of reserves, 2002 production volumes, and the 10-year supply and demand forecast for Alberta's diverse energy resources. (Energy)
- **participated** in Bio 2003 in Washington, D.C., the biotechnology industry's largest annual conference and trade show. Premier Klein and Alberta industry representatives held roundtable talks resulting in agreement for further discussion. (Economic Development)
- **launched** a tourism marketing recovery program to offset potential market fallout due to the Iraq war, SARS and to combat anticipated increased competition from Toronto and Saskatchewan. (Economic Development)
- **funded** the Grande Alberta Economic Region as part of a mitigation strategy following a downturn in coal mining activity in the region. (Economic Development)
- **participated** in the Western Aerospace Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba to gather and disseminate market intelligence, showcase Alberta's capabilities, and build relationships in an effort to strengthen Alberta's aerospace industry. (Economic Development)
- **organized and delivered** a workshop and a mini trade show for marketing, investment, and development in health industries with the Alberta Health Industry Alliance and other industry stakeholders. (Economic Development)
- **completed and released** the study *Productivity Improvements on Alberta Major Construction Projects* with the Construction Owners Association of Alberta, which addresses construction performance and provides recommendations for project owners, project managers, and tradespersons to reduce project cost overruns and schedule delays. (Economic Development)
- **organized** industry participation at the Locations Trade Show in Santa Monica, California to attract potential film and television production in Alberta. (Economic Development)
- **launched** the new Alberta Film Web site offering a more complete package of information on Alberta Film Commission and the film industry in Alberta. The Web site contains more than 9,000 images of Alberta filming locations, and is used to create and distribute location packages to producers. (Economic Development)
- **pressed** Alberta's international trade priorities with Canadian negotiators, WTO officials, and WTO member countries during a mission to Europe. (International and Intergovernmental Relations)
- **began** developing an economic impact model that demonstrates the financial contributions of Alberta's arts groups and organizations. The Department of Canadian Heritage has been approached as a potential partner in the project. (Community Development)
- **released** the 2002-03 Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Annual Report. (Revenue)
- **presented** the Sustainability Fund and Capital Plan as key improvements to Alberta's fiscal plan to credit rating agencies and investment firms. (Finance)
- **established** the Advisory Committee on Alternative Capital Financing to provide strategic and expert advice to the government on alternative financing approaches to capital projects. (Finance)
- **initiated** a cross-Canada review of the auto insurance industry, comparing insurance systems in other provinces, with a view to developing a fair, affordable, and accessible auto insurance system in Alberta. (Finance)

- **established** connections with the Palliser Economic Partnership (PEP) in Southern Alberta to facilitate long-term economic development and help ensure a skilled workforce, attract skilled workers, and retain youths. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **established** connections with the Economic Development Alliance of Southeast Alberta, a partnership between the City of Medicine Hat, Town of Redcliff, and the two counties, to offer labour market information and staff expertise in developing an economic plan for the area. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **promoted** the Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC) work-sharing program with beef industry employers in response to the BSE impact on the beef industry. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **signed** the Agricultural Policy Framework Implementation Agreement, which govern the details of the delivery of new programs under the Agricultural Policy Framework. (Agriculture, Food and Rural Development)
- **developed** with the federal government the Canada Alberta Income Stabilization Program, which provides producers with one program to access for their disaster mitigation and income stabilization resources. (Agriculture, Food and Rural Development)
- **launched** a \$10.5-million federal/provincial grasshopper program to help defray grasshopper control expenses for agricultural producers suffering from the most severe grasshopper infestation in 40 years. (Agriculture, Food and Rural Development)

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:

- **achieved** sufficient cost savings through tendering and engineering practices to add two more interchanges to Anthony Henday Drive in Edmonton. (Transportation)
- **struck** an implementation committee that will develop a plan to guide the creation of the unified family court, which will help improve access to the justice system and improve the experience for family law litigants. (Justice and Attorney General)
- **passed** legislation to help ensure that class action lawsuits in Alberta proceed in a fair and efficient manner, and that Alberta legislation is consistent with a majority of Canadian provinces. (Justice and Attorney General)
- **released** the Safety System Review Final Report, the result of stakeholder consultations on the *Safety Codes Act*, which will guide Alberta's safety system governing the design, construction, maintenance, and operation of buildings and equipment. (Municipal Affairs)
- **confirmed** that Earth Tech (Canada) now operates the Swan Hills Treatment Centre on behalf of the province. It is a unique facility in Canada and one of few in the world, and it has played a principal role in ridding the province of hazardous waste. (Infrastructure)
- **negotiated** right of use to nearly 3,000 kilometers of fibre from TELUS Communications Inc. The fibre will be used to inter-connect communities in the Extended Area network, the portion of Alberta SuperNet connecting 395 smaller communities. (Innovation and Science)
- **welcomed** Dr. Robert Wolkow to Alberta for a five-year term as iCORE Chair of Nanoscale Information and Communications Technologies. Dr. Wolkow will head up a \$10 million research program that aims to develop functional nanotechnology devices. The project is jointly funded by iCORE, the University of Alberta and the National Institute for Nanotechnology. (Innovation and Science)
- **invested** more than \$5 million dollars through the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute, in partnership with the Agricultural Funding Consortium for agricultural Research and Development as part of the 2003-04 Call for Proposals. Key research and development initiatives supported include work in Bio-Plastics, Food Safety, Animal Welfare, Crop and Livestock disease resistance, Nutraceuticals and Sustainable Production practices. (Innovation and Science)

- **created** the Institute for Food, Agri-Industrial and Agricultural Sciences Alberta with the Alberta Research Council and the University of Alberta. The institute will pool resources, staff and facilities valued at over \$750 million to manage and deliver agriculture, agri-food and agri-industrial research and education programs. (Innovation and Science; Agriculture, Food and Rural Development)
- **provided** \$950,000 through Alberta Energy Research Institute towards Canada's first high voltage, fully operational fuel cell, installed at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT). The \$3.2 million applied research project will investigate ways to use the clean energy and collaborate with other western Canadian research institutions to improve environmentally friendly fuel cell technologies. (Innovation and Science)
- **implemented** the first phase of the Tax Exempt Fuel Sales System enabling bulk fuel dealers across the province to enter and obtain information electronically during extended hours. (Revenue)
- **developed and piloted** a new Project Management Framework as a support tool for the comprehensive planning of large initiatives. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **transferred** the Office of the Public Guardian and shelters for the homeless and hard-to-house to Alberta Seniors with associated budgets and full-time employees. The transfer will enhance co-ordination of services and create greater efficiencies in the delivery of services. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **transferred** responsibility for mental health programs and facilities to the province's nine health regions. The transfer of mental health services responds to recommendations of the Premier's Advisory Council on Health. (Health and Wellness)
- **accepted** the recommendations of the Alberta Blue Cross Review Committee, which examined the accountability, corporate governance, and possible competitive advantage of Blue Cross in the marketplace. (Health and Wellness)
- **provided** \$400,000 to the Critical Care Line, which allows physicians in remote or rural communities to receive advice from on-call medical specialists when treating critically ill or injured patients. (Health and Wellness)
- **organized and held** a Scenario Planning Workshop for Alberta's architectural, engineering and construction sector attended by 25 key sector companies. The workshop was used to develop and validate future industry scenarios based on 10 major issues affecting the growth and competitiveness of the sector, and which form the basis of a five to 10 year sector strategy. (Municipal Affairs)
- **explored** ways to help smaller communities improve their water treatment facilities through an agreement with EPCOR to remotely operate and monitor water facilities in seven Northern Alberta communities. The regional management approach of this pilot project may provide solutions to some water quality problems and may attract other interested partners into potable water service. (Environment)
- **announced** the development of a \$12-million agri-value incubation facility in Leduc, which will help entrepreneurs make the transition from product development to the market place. (Agriculture, Food and Rural Development)
- **announced** \$17-million to be given to University of Alberta's Agri-Food Discovery Place, which will work on food-borne pathogen research to develop new technologies to improve the safety of the world's meat supply. (Agriculture, Food and Rural Development)

PRESERVATION

The following activities support the *Preservation* core business ensuring 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 First Quarter of 2003-04, the Alberta government:

- **announced** 45 infrastructure projects worth more than \$44 million in 30 communities funded by the Infrastructure Canada-Alberta Program. (Transportation)
- **announced** the Cities Special Transportation Grant and the Resource Road Program as part of a program assisting municipalities with their infrastructure needs. (Transportation)
- **issued** the Energy and Utility Board's second annual report on the Public Safety and Sour Gas Initiative, covering work that the EUB and others have undertaken to address the 87 recommendations of the Provincial Advisory on Public Safety and Sour Gas. (Energy)
- **launched** the Alberta Lottery Fund Web site, a portal to information about the lottery fund, lottery funded groups and initiatives, and to application forms for lottery funding. (Gaming)
- **increased** funding by 25 per cent to the foundations and granting programs supported through the Alberta Lottery Fund. An additional \$26.5 million annually, beginning 2003-04, will help local groups enhance Alberta communities. (Gaming)
- **completed** the first year of the Community Initiatives Program, which saw \$30 million distributed to 1,202 volunteer and community-based initiatives such as community services, seniors' services, libraries, arts, culture, sport, and recreation in 264 communities. (Gaming)
- **issued** 1,170 charitable gaming event licenses to community groups. In 2002-03, charitable gaming generated more than \$200 million directly for these organizations. (Gaming)
- **presented** the first Alberta Emergency Services Medals to 1,648 emergency personnel, paying tribute to outstanding full-time and volunteer members who have committed 12 or more years to emergency service in Alberta. (Municipal Affairs)
- **paid** some \$29 million in unconditional grants to 300 municipalities. (Municipal Affairs)
- **launched** the Municipal Wildfire Assistance Program to help municipal governments deal with the cost of fighting wildfires. (Municipal Affairs)
- **announced** the 2003-04 Municipal Sponsorship Program, which offers grants for projects promoting innovation, excellence and co-operation in municipal government, administration, and services. (Municipal Affairs)

- **developed** a two year program for the people of Crowsnest Pass to establish a monitoring and warning system for Turtle Mountain. (Municipal Affairs)
- **endorsed** a framework for a new relationship between the provincial government and municipalities. The council is currently addressing the pressures on municipal infrastructure caused by growth, and improving how ambulance services are provided. (Municipal Affairs)
- **developed** a crisis management plan, in consultation with public and private sector organizations, in the event of terrorist activity in the province. (Municipal Affairs)
- **partnered** with the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Safety Codes Council to develop control processes for private sewage disposal systems. Also partnered with the Alberta On-site Wastewater Contractors Association to provide training for 300 installers of private sewage disposal systems. (Municipal Affairs)
- **granted** the first Municipal Safety Recognition Awards, which recognize municipalities that have achieved five-year milestones in their accreditation history and the important role they assume under the *Safety Codes Act*. (Municipal Affairs)
- **promoted** Crime Prevention Week to increase awareness of crime prevention and encourage Albertans to make their communities safer. An awards ceremony recognized 14 individuals and organizations for outstanding crime prevention efforts across Alberta. (Solicitor General)
- **redefined** the role of special constables, allowing them enforcement authority on primary highways under approved traffic safety plans developed with local police. (Solicitor General)
- **strengthened** the province's fight against organized crime and gangs with \$3.5 million, which will help establish an Integrated Organized Crime and Gang Enforcement Unit of four teams, each with eight investigators and support staff. (Solicitor General)
- **reinforced** the need for an effective national sex-offender registry before the House of Commons Justice Committee, to persuade the federal government to include many known sex offenders in the proposed registry. (Solicitor General; Justice and Attorney General)
- **participated** in Whitecourt's Downtown Revitalization Committee, the focus of which is the creation of employment opportunities in downtown. This project will benefit individuals who do not have access to transportation. (Human Resources and Employment)
- **provided** \$2,000 to help the Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council Police Service educate at-risk youths about the positive results of staying in school and making healthy life choices. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)
- **participated** in the Community Solution to Gang Violence in Edmonton. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)
- **joined** with Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Little Red River Cree Nation, and the Municipal District of Mackenzie in a partnership to construct and maintain all-weather roads to the communities of Fox Lake and Garden River. Construction will cost approximately \$18 million, shared by the federal and provincial governments. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)
- **redesigned** Alberta's driver's licence program to address the worldwide rise in identity crime. Producing the cards at a central, high-security facility and adding new security features to the card itself have made Alberta's licence the most secure document of its type in North America. (Government Services)
- **issued** consumer alerts to caution Albertans on unscrupulous businesses and provided consumer tips for dealing with a variety of situations in the marketplace. Subjects included home renovation contractors and Internet promotions. (Government Services)
- **completed** 459 investigations related to consumer protection and recovered more than \$183,000 for Alberta consumers. (Government Services)
- **celebrated** Alberta's two million volunteers during National Volunteer Week and held the Vitalize conference in Edmonton for approximately 1,200 delegates. (Community Development)

- **awarded** 31 grants totalling approximately \$19 million over two years through the Centennial Legacies Grant Program Phase II to communities, organizations, municipalities, First Nations, and Métis Settlements. (Community Development)
- **granted** \$10.4 million for government-owned centennial projects including Turner Valley Gas Plant Historic Site, Lougheed House, Jubilee Auditoria, the Provincial Museum of Alberta, and the Provincial Archives. Several provincial parks will also receive funding for improvements to interpretive centres, which provide important visitor programming and environmental educational services. (Community Development)
- **presented** the Minister's Seniors Service Awards recognizing volunteer work in enhancing the quality of life of seniors. (Seniors)
- **designated** the flood risk area for the Town of Sundre and adjoining lands in Mountain View County No. 17 under the Canada-Alberta Flood Risk Damage Reduction Program. This program is aimed at reducing the damage of flooding by identifying vulnerable areas and encouraging municipalities to regulate development in flood prone areas. (Environment)
- **released** phase two of the South Saskatchewan River Basin water management plan, which addresses water management issues, including the availability of water for future allocations and river flows for the aquatic environment, and seeks to find the best balance between water consumption and environmental protection in the river basin. (Environment)
- **relocated** 57 bears, 55 elk and other ungulates, five cougars, and 138 other animals to protect communities. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **provided** information to Albertans about reducing conflicts with bears in backcountry areas. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **distributed** approximately 45,000 FireSmart manuals and brochures to municipalities and the public, and initiated nine FireSmart projects. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **introduced** the *Personal Information Protection Act*, which will limit the kind of personal information businesses can collect. Albertans must be told how their personal information will be used, and if a business intends to disclose information to another party for sales or marketing purposes, individual consent must first be obtained. (Government Services)
- **continued** strengthening rural Alberta communities through cross-ministerial initiatives such as the Rural Development Initiative. Supported as well as provided support of agricultural societies, fairs and rodeos, adding to the well-being and economy of small communities. (Agriculture, Food and Rural Development)

Protecting Alberta's Natural and Cultural Heritage

Albertans want to ensure Alberta's awe-inspiring natural beauty and rich cultural heritage is preserved for future generations. In the First Quarter, the Alberta government:

- **expanded** the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology's agreement with the Blood Nation for the preservation and storage of significant vertebrate fossils found on First Nations Lands following the discovery of a second marine reptile specimen on the Blood Reserve in Southern Alberta. (Community Development)
- **published** *Archaeology in Alberta: A View from the New Millennium* through a partnership with the Provincial Museum of Alberta's Archaeology Program and the Archaeological Society of Alberta. Funded by the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, this book marks the first major synthesis of Alberta archaeology since 1965. (Community Development)
- **proclaimed** Bill 24, the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Amendment Act (2000)*, and established the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland, Alberta's first heritage rangeland. Heritage Rangelands is a new class of protected area under the Act, which provides the legal basis for their establishment, preservation and management. (Community Development)
- **celebrated** National Aboriginal Day, showcasing Aboriginal culture, language, and traditions. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)
- **assisted** the Athabasca Landing Foundation with its interpretative centre project. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)
- **reaffirmed** Alberta's leadership in environmental management by introducing legislation that will provide the framework for implementing the province's action plan on climate change. The *Climate Change and Issues Management Act (Bill 37)* strengthens and complements Alberta's existing legislation on environmental protection and resource management related to air emissions. (Environment)
- **continued** on-going monitoring for the presence of mountain pine beetles to help protect Alberta's forest industry. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **participated** in the Shifting Gears program to encourage the responsible use of recreational areas by campers and off-road vehicle enthusiasts and promote environmental stewardship. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **contacted** more than 15,500 people during compliance checks aimed at educating the public and helping reduce wildlife poaching. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **investigated** 455 instances of illegal activities involving fish and wildlife. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **stocked** provincial water bodies with more than 3.5 million trout and two million walleye. (Sustainable Resource Development)

- **worked** to develop recovery plans for caribou, grizzly bears, Ord's kangaroo rats, and trumpeter swans. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **continued** with a major study of grizzly bears to support the development of management strategies and recovery plans. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **clarified** recreational and exploration access on public lands through the proclamation of the *Agricultural Dispositions Statutes Amendment Act, 2003* (Bill 16), which promotes respect between agricultural disposition holders and other users of public land. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **introduced** new range health assessment methods to measure the health of grasslands, forests and tame pasture. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **gave** presentations to schools, offered nature tours, presented wildfire prevention displays, took part in community games and events and participated in trade shows during National Forest Week, with the aim of communicating Alberta's role in managing provincial forest lands. (Sustainable Resource Development)
- **completed** the federally-funded *Textiles Catalogue Upgrading Project Phase II*, which inventoried the Provincial Museum of Alberta's textiles collection and added digital images and information essential to textile research. Many research tasks can now be done at desktop computers without handling the artifacts. (Community Development)
- **added** a new Web site, Fish Diversity, to the Provincial Museum of Alberta's Virtual Exhibits. (Community Development)

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