

April 13, 2005

Budget 2005 invests in the next Alberta

Fiscal and economic highlights

- Alberta's 12th consecutive balanced budget, first with accumulated debt eliminated.
- Deficits remain against the law; no new debt to increase operating spending.
- Heritage Fund to be inflation-proofed with \$667 million over three years.
- Economic growth forecast at 3.7 per cent, job growth at 33,400 in 2005.

Leading in Learning highlights

- Advanced education funding increased 13.4 per cent; access, affordability strengthened; \$3 billion endowment to be established in Heritage Fund with \$250 million initial allocation.
- Education sees 7.1 per cent increase; class size reductions continue.

The Best Place to Live, Work and Visit highlights

- Health and Wellness budget up 8.6 per cent to nearly \$9 billion, including an 11.3 per cent increase in health authority base operating grants.
- AISH gets \$80 million boost this year, \$198 million over three years: raises monthly income benefit, adds enhancements, funds higher caseload and health benefit costs.
- 10 per cent increase in 2005-06 for policing and justice system provides for largest single-year increase of police officers in 20 years; funding increased to fight organized crime, provide municipal policing assistance.
- Funding enhances seniors' dental and optical assistance, protects senior homeowners from school property tax increases.

Unleashing Innovation and Competing in the Global Marketplace highlights

- \$9.2 billion Capital Plan commits unmatched support for infrastructure; municipalities get \$3.1 billion over three years.
- Alberta is Canada's low-tax province Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit enhanced; school property tax mill rates cut about five per cent.
- \$250 million will be provided through endowment funds for medical, and science and engineering research in Alberta over the next three years.
- \$200 million over five years will encourage the development of technology to enhance oil and gas recovery.

Edmonton... Major investments in learning, infrastructure, policing, health and other programs were unveiled by Finance Minister Shirley McClellan, in presenting *Budget 2005: Investing in the Next Alberta*.

"This centennial year is an Alberta milestone," McClellan said. "With the accumulated debt behind us, we have a renewed opportunity to further invest in the priorities of Albertans."

	Budget 2005-06 estimate
Total Revenue (millions)	\$27,346
Resource revenue (millions)	\$7,680
Total expense (millions)	\$25,826
Surplus (net revenue - millions)	\$1,520
Oil price full-year average (WTI US\$/bbl)	\$42.00
Natural gas price full-year average (CDN\$/gigajoule)	\$5.60

With the accumulated debt eliminated, available surpluses are no longer required for debt repayment. Over the next three years about \$5.5 billion will be available for reallocation from the Sustainability Fund as follows:

- \$4.1 billion to the Capital Account,
- \$667 million to inflation-proof the Heritage Fund,
- \$250 million to the Heritage Fund as the initial allocation for the advanced education endowment,
- \$500 million to the Medical Research Endowment Fund.

Investing in learning

The advanced education system is a key priority for Albertans as reflected in the *It's Your Future* results, and major investments in access, affordability and facilities will help provide Albertans with the best access and highest participation rate of post-secondary education in Canada. Almost \$6.8 billion, 26 per cent of *Budget 2005*, will go to basic and post-secondary education programs and capital this year.

Investing in health

Albertans' top-rated priority in the *It's Your Future* survey was to provide a quality, affordable health care system. Over the past decade, health spending has grown on average by 10 per cent a year. Over \$9.5 billion, 37 per cent of the budget, will go to health programs and capital this year.

Investing in people

This year funding to support those in need will increase by \$205 million, or 8.3 per cent, to \$2.7 billion.

Seniors benefits will increase, affordable supportive living units in rural Alberta will be added, and seniors are exempt from health care premiums.

The Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) monthly income benefit will rise and the program will be enhanced. Services for children, assistance to Persons with Developmental Disabilities, and health benefit programs for children in low-income families and eligible adults will all see increased funding.

The Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit will be enhanced in July 2005: the qualifying income threshold will be lowered, the program will be expanded to include up to four children, and the maximum credit for the first child will be increased. About 13,000 new families will be added to the program with these enhancements. The maximum credit amounts and phase-out threshold will be indexed to inflation starting July 2006.

Investing in communities, municipalities and infrastructure

More police will be on Alberta's streets as new funding gives the largest single-year increase of police officers in 20 years. Nearly 200 police officers, including more than 100 RCMP under the provincial policing agreement, will be added in 2005-06. Funding will also increase to fight organized crime and provide secure courtrooms and prisoner transfers.

Community-based prevention services and support for victims of family violence and bullying will be enhanced through a three-year, \$35 million action plan.

Support to municipalities will increase substantially, through enhancements to the police funding model and a major investment in municipal and provincial infrastructure.

The 2005-08 Capital Plan is a three-year, \$9.2 billion commitment to support the construction, acquisition, upgrading and rehabilitation of Alberta's infrastructure and other capital. It is a level of support unmatched in Canada.

The plan includes more than \$3.1 billion for municipal infrastructure support, and will include the first three years of the Municipal Infrastructure Program. Over the next three years, municipalities will see:

- \$600 million per year for the five year, \$3 billion Alberta Municipal Infrastructure Program,
- \$320 million a year on average in direct transportation grants, and
- \$134 million a year on average for water and wastewater grants, funding under the federal New Deal and Canada/Alberta infrastructure programs, and other municipal infrastructure support.

Investing in our environment

The province is blessed with abundant natural resources, and Alberta's future will depend on making the best use of them, adding value here in Alberta, preserving our environment, and seizing new opportunities to build a strong and diverse economy.

Alberta's parks will see increased capital investment with \$48 million added over three years, and \$4 million added this year for provincial park programs and facility maintenance. Fisheries management programs will be revitalized and funding will address the mountain pine beetle infestation.

Research and innovation will be pursued through energy and climate change research funding provided over the next three years, with a priority on oil sands upgrading, clean coal technology, water management research, enhanced recovery of conventional oil and gas, exploring alternative energy sources, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

- Backgrounder - Charts and Graphs: Revenue, Capital Plan, Expense by Ministry, Expense by Function, Interprovincial tax comparisons.
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Editor's note:

a CD-ROM is available of high-resolution electronic copies of selected charts and graphs used in the budget, which can be used without further permission required. A copy has been provided to media at the Legislature. Copies are also available from Finance Communications: (780) 427-4414.

Media enquiries may be directed to:

Tracy Balash
A/Director of Communications
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(780) 427-5364

To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

This news release is available on the Alberta Finance homepage at: <http://www.finance.gov.ab.ca>

Backgrounder

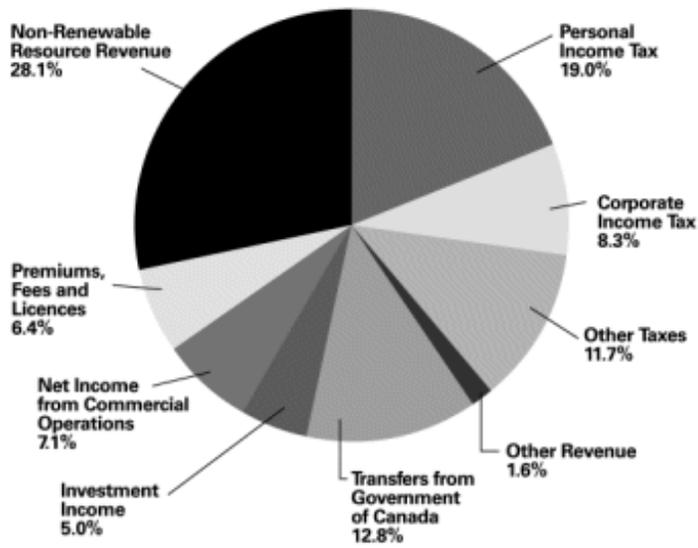
April 13, 2005

Charts and graphs related to Budget 2005

(high-resolution digital versions of these and other charts are available on CD-ROM from Finance Communications: (780) 427-4414. CDs have been provided to media at the Legislature on budget day)

2005-06 Revenue

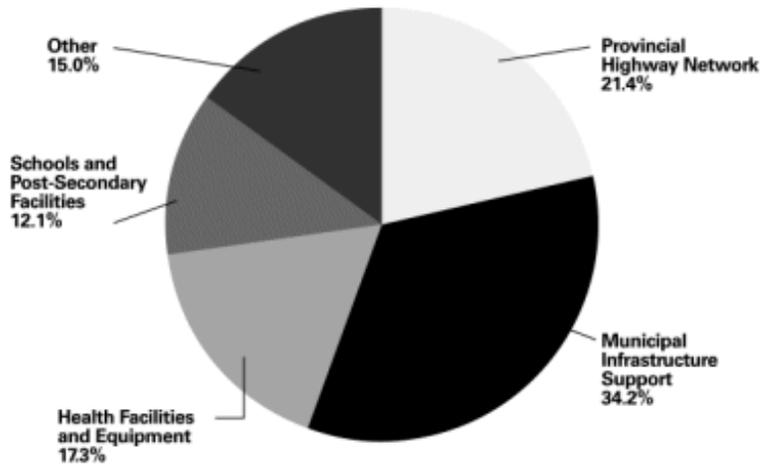
\$27.3 Billion



Source: Alberta Finance

2005-08 Capital Plan

\$9.2 Billion

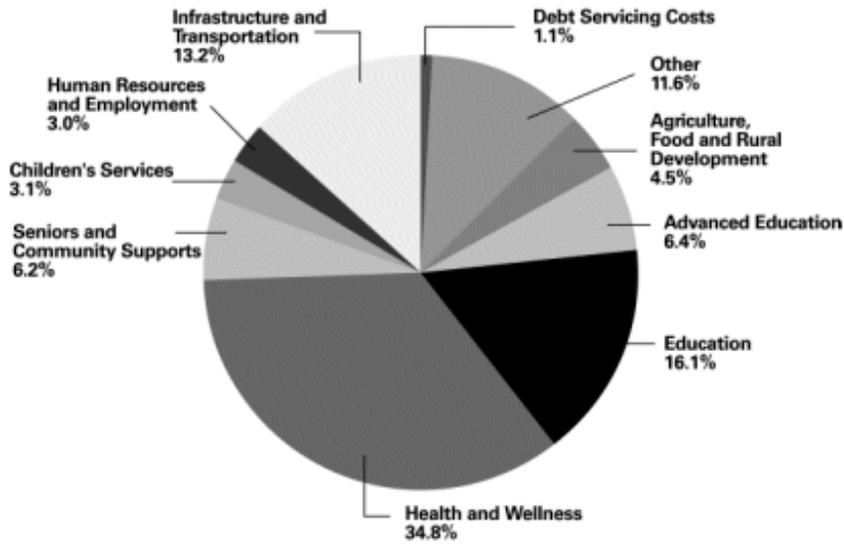


Source: Alberta Finance

2005-06 Expense

Expense by Ministry

\$25.8 billion

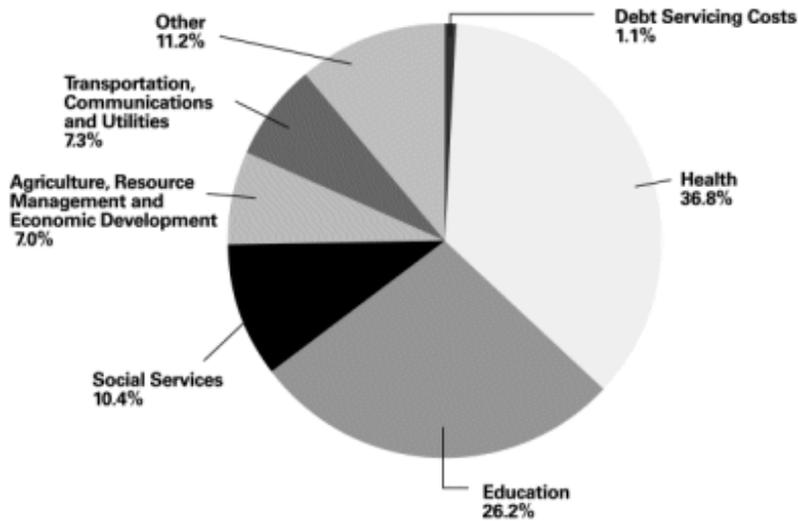


Source: Alberta Finance

2005-06 Expense

Expense by Function

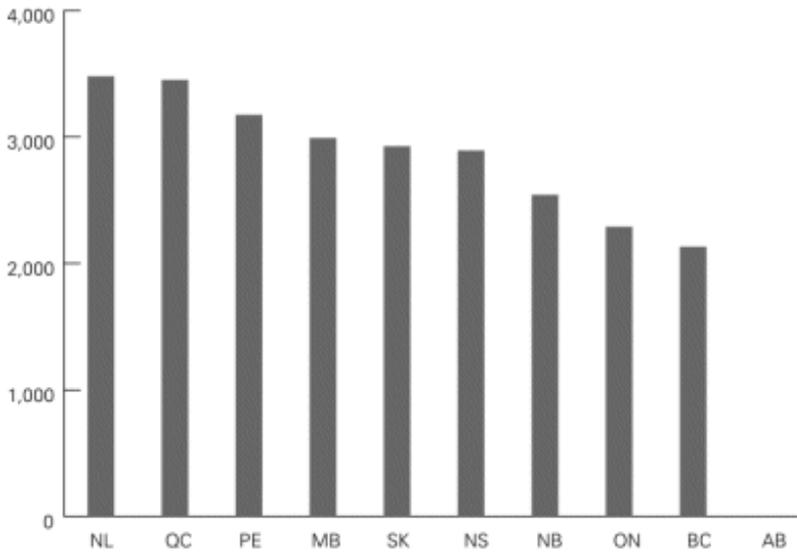
\$25.8 Billion



Source: Alberta Finance

Alberta Tax Advantage

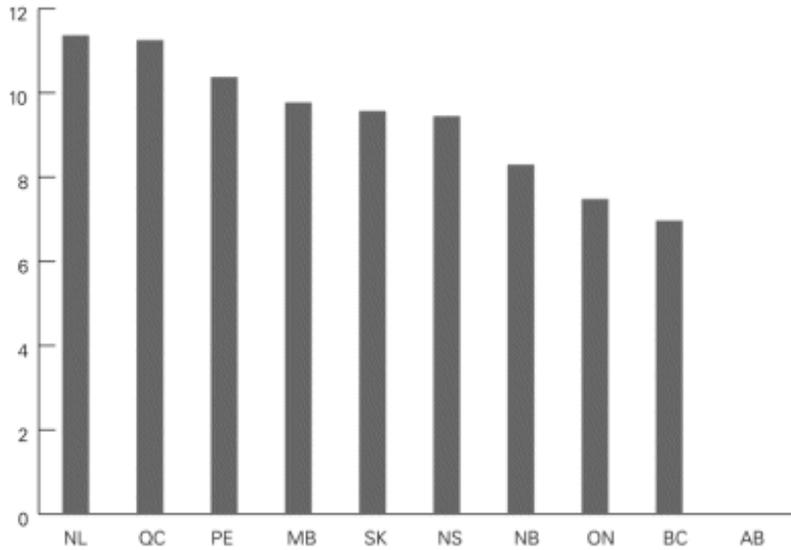
(dollars per capita)



This graph shows, on a per capita basis, the total additional provincial taxes, health care premiums, and liquor markups individuals and businesses would have to pay if Alberta had the same tax systems as other provinces. *Source: Alberta Finance.*

Alberta's Tax Advantage

(billions of dollars)



This graph shows the total additional provincial taxes, health care premiums, and liquor markups individuals and businesses would have to pay if Alberta had the same tax systems as other provinces. *Source: Alberta Finance.*

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Background

April 13, 2005

Budget Summary by Ministry

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

The 2005-06 budget of \$39.3 million is a \$3.7 million increase over the 2004-05 forecast of \$35.6 million. Of this, \$2.75 million is the Ministry's initial year contribution to a five-year multi-ministry program to develop First Nations economic capacity and support partnerships between First Nations and the private sector. An increase of \$1.45 million is also budgeted for the government's initiative on Aboriginal consultation in the resource sector. In 2007-08, the Ministry's budget drops to \$27 million, reflecting the March 31, 2007 expiration of Métis Settlements Accord funding arrangements.

For information, contact Jason Gariepy (780) 415-0876.

Advanced Education

Advanced Education 2005-06 program expense will be more than \$1.6 billion, an increase of \$196 million or 13.4 per cent. By 2007-08, total program expense for the Ministry will be almost \$1.9 billion, an increase of \$433 million or almost 30 per cent over three years.

Support to post-secondary institutions will increase by \$126 million, or 10.3 per cent, to almost \$1.4 billion in 2005-06, and by 2007-08 it will increase to over \$1.6 billion, a \$382 million, or 31.2 per cent increase over the next three years.

Additional information is available in a separate Budget 2005 news release from Alberta Advanced Education.

For information, contact Michael Shields (780) 422-4495.

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

The Ministry has budgeted over \$1.1 billion for 2005-06, including risk management programs delivered through the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC). This compares to last year's forecast of \$1.4 billion, which includes \$622 million in one-time disaster spending to respond to the ongoing BSE situation.

Additional information is available in a separate Budget 2005 news release from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

For information, contact Terry Willock (780) 422-7683.

Children's Services

Children's Services 2005-06 program expense will be \$798.6 million, an increase of \$31.7 million, or 4.2 per cent. By 2007-08, the Ministry's program expense will rise to \$851.3 million, an \$84.7 million or 11.0 per cent increase over three years.

Regional Child and Family Services Authorities will receive \$19 million more than last year, an increase of 3.4 per cent for delivery of quality services for children, youth and families across Alberta. This includes increases to continue implementation of improved services enabled by the new Child, Youth and Family

Enhancement Act and the Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act.

In response to the recommendations from the Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying, more than \$35 million over three years has been allocated across government to implement a cross-ministry action plan that will improve community-based protection and prevention services and support for children and family members who are victims of family violence or bullying.

Family and Community Support Services will receive a \$2 million (2.8 per cent) increase in 2005-06 to address population growth across the province. Funding is also available to continue adding new Parent Link Centres across the province.

Children's Services' budget does not include any provision for new or expanded services related to the new federal initiative on child care. Alberta continues to participate in negotiations with the federal government and other provinces and territories regarding a new agreement on child care, and anticipates receiving its fair share of new federal funding allocated for this initiative in the 2005 federal budget.

For information, contact Jody Korchinski (780) 415-6451.

Community Development

Community Development's program expense in 2005-06 is expected to be \$247 million, an increase of 19.9 per cent or \$41 million from the 2004-05 forecast of \$206 million. The increase includes:

- \$23 million for 2005 Centennial celebrations and legacy project grants;
- \$7 million for parks maintenance and programs, for amortization of new investments in parks infrastructure and facilities, and for grants of park land to municipalities;
- \$1 million for grants to libraries and library systems;
- \$4 million for exhibit redevelopment in museums and historic sites across the province;
- \$3 million to assume responsibility for the operations of the Jubilee Auditoria as recommended by the Auditor General; and
- \$3 million for the final year of the Alberta NHL Teams Initiative (funded by taxes on players' salaries for games played in Alberta).

The Ministry capital investment budget of \$45 million in 2005-06 includes:

- \$25 million to pay for previous commitments: \$13 million to complete upgrades on the Canmore Nordic Centre, \$10 million to upgrade water and sewage treatment facilities as part of the government's Water for Life strategy, and \$2 million for ongoing parks maintenance.
- \$20 million in new commitments: \$10 million for 2005 Centennial interpretive centres in four provincial parks, and \$10 million for ongoing and deferred parks maintenance.

For information, contact Carol Chawrun (780) 427-2395.

Economic Development

Economic Development's 2005-06 Budget will be \$79.8 million, a \$21.7 million or 37.5 per cent increase from the 2004-05 forecast. By 2007-08, the Ministry's program expense will increase to \$90.8 million.

The increase in 2005-06 primarily reflects an additional \$18 million increase, for a total of \$42 million, in the budget for tourism marketing and development. This significant new investment will support the development of the tourism industry and marketable tourism product through additional marketing and research, and by providing more timely information.

The Ministry will also focus on implementing Alberta's economic development strategy, *Securing Tomorrow's Prosperity*, which was released last April. The strategy aims to ensure that Alberta's economy is capable of constant innovation, creates higher value jobs, goods and services and is able to sustain Albertans' prosperity and enviable quality of life.

For information, contact Janice Schroeder (780) 427-0528.

Education

In 2005-06, program support for the province's basic education system - Kindergarten to Grade 12 - will increase by \$287 million to \$4.33 billion. This is a 7.1 per cent increase over the 2004-05 forecast, and includes \$177 million in property tax support to opted-out school boards. By 2007-08, this support will be almost \$4.7 billion, an increase of \$638 million or 16 per cent, over three years.

Additional information is available in a separate Budget 2005 news release from Alberta Education.

For information, contact Kathy Telfer (780) 422-4495.

Energy

Energy ministry spending for 2005-06 is \$203 million, an increase of \$6 million from a forecast \$197 million for 2004-05. The 2004-05 forecast includes one-time increases for energy regulation and orphan well abandonment.

The 2005-06 budget includes a \$3.5 million increase for abandonment operations, expenses which are collected from industry. The budget also includes a \$3 million increase for increased approval, monitoring and regulatory activities by the Department and the Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) and \$466,000 to monitor the stability of Turtle Mountain, the site of the Frank Slide 100 years ago.

The Ministry's 2005-06 capital investment budget of \$13 million is \$2 million higher than in 2004-05 to accommodate reinvestment in information technology.

For information, contact Cathy Housdorff (780) 422-3667.

Environment

The Ministry's 2005-06 budgeted program expense is \$138 million, a \$5 million increase from the 2004-05 forecast. The increase will assist in developing reliable environmental data and information and support the development of an integrated approach to resource and environmental management in the province.

For information, contact Irwin Huberman at (780) 427-2848.

Executive Council

Executive Council's budget for 2005-06 is \$26 million, up from \$21 million in 2004-05. The increase over 2004-05 forecast largely results from the transfer of funding responsibility for internal audit services from client ministries.

For information, contact Jerry Bellikka (780) 415-2417.

Finance

Finance's budget for 2005-06 is \$588 million, \$5 million less than 2004-05 forecast. The decrease results from lower interest rates and reduced borrowings by the Alberta Capital Finance Authority, more than offsetting spending increases in the Ministry.

Spending increases include: additional funding for the Alberta Heritage Foundations to improve research capabilities; greater funding to address investment capability, capacity and quality assurance; and further expenditures to improve compliance and audit coverage in taxation.

For information, contact Tracy Balash (780) 422-2126.

Gaming

Gaming's 2005-06 program expense will be \$169.2 million, a reduction of \$28.4 million over the 2004-05 forecast of \$197.6 million. The 2004-05 forecast included a one-time \$40 million contribution to the seven major fairs and exhibitions for capital renewal projects and a \$5 million donation to the Canadian Red Cross for Southeast Asia Tsunami Relief.

By 2007-08, Gaming program expense will rise to \$207.6 million largely due to a \$36 million increase in the Lottery Fund flow through for the First Nations Development Fund grant program.

Starting in 2005-06, the Calgary Stampede and Edmonton Northlands Exhibition both receive an additional \$3 million annually for capital redevelopment to upgrade facilities to support community and regional events.

The 2005-06 net gaming and liquor revenue is estimated to be \$1.767 billion. By 2007-08, net gaming and liquor revenues will increase to \$1.877 billion reflecting anticipated casino expansion.

For information, contact Marilyn Carlyle-Helms (780) 447-8719.

Government Services

The 2005-06 program spending of \$90 million is an increase of \$12 million over last year's forecast. The increase is largely to address sustained increases in transaction volumes and rising demand for various registry services. It is also targeted to issues surrounding the privacy and security of information, management of government records and enhancing protective measures against the emerging threat of identity theft.

For information, contact Ryan Cromb (780) 415-6051.

Health and Wellness

The Ministry's program expense budget for 2005-06 will reach nearly \$9 billion, up \$707 million or 8.6 per cent over the 2004-05 forecast. Future increases of 4.0 per cent and 4.0 per cent will bring Ministry spending to over \$9.7 billion by 2007-08.

The largest component of the 2005-06 budget increase will go to health authorities for their operations. Operating grants will increase by \$572 million or 11.3 per cent to exceed \$5.6 billion in 2005-06. Of the 2005-06 increase, \$25 million is targeted specifically for the Mental Health Innovation Fund. By 2007-08, health authority operating grants are expected to exceed \$6.3 billion.

Additional information is available in a separate Budget 2005 news release from Alberta Health and Wellness.

For information, contact Mark Kastner (780) 427-7164.

Human Resources and Employment

Ministry spending in 2005-06 is projected to be \$778 million. Setting aside the special \$20 million provided in 2004-05 to help government departments fund unanticipated manpower costs, the Ministry's 2005-06 budget has an increase of \$16 million. The 2005-06 budget includes \$426 million to help people in need, \$299 million to help people train for work, and \$27 million to help keep workplaces safe, fair and stable.

Within Personnel Administration Office's budget, an increase of \$4 million is allocated to support a developmental initiative for executive managers as well as for resources to support other corporate human resource initiatives benefiting public service employees throughout government, including succession management and workplace health.

For information, contact Leanne Stangeland (780) 427-5649.

Infrastructure and Transportation

Infrastructure and Transportation's total 2005-06 capital and operating budget, including energy rebate funding, is increasing by 10.6 per cent, compared to the 2004-05 forecast, to nearly \$4.0 billion.

This includes \$1.6 billion for capital projects for schools, post-secondary institutions, healthcare facilities, roads, water/wastewater projects, government buildings and other capital priorities. It also contains more than \$1 billion in support to municipal infrastructure projects, including \$600 million in new municipal infrastructure grants - the first installment in government's \$3 billion promise to municipalities. The increase in funding demonstrates government's commitment to preserving and expanding infrastructure across the province.

Additional information is available in a separate Budget 2005 news release on Alberta's Capital Plan.

For information, contact Bart Johnson 415-1841.

Innovation and Science

The Ministry's 2005-06 program expense is \$181 million, an increase of \$22 million over the 2004-05 forecast of \$159 million (excluding \$38 million in 2004-05 emergency funding for BSE related prion research).

This is the second year of the Innovation and Service Excellence Program announced in Budget 2004. The 2005-06 second year spending will be \$16 million. By March 31, 2007, \$33 million will be spent over the three years of the program to encourage innovation within government and related organizations.

Innovation and Science has devoted \$7 million in 2005-06 to its new Emerging Opportunities program dedicated to Unleashing Innovation in Alberta.

The Ministry's 2005-06 budget also includes increases of

- \$2 million to continue research into priority areas outlined in Alberta's Climate Change Action Plan and the Alberta Energy Research Strategy;
- \$2 million for information and communications technology research in conjunction with the creation of a provincial ICT Institute to support the development of a globally competitive ICT sector; and
- \$10 million for Alberta Research Council research activities funded by private sector contracts.

Offsetting these increases is a \$15 million decrease in the Alberta Science and Research Investments Programs in part due to reallocations to research priorities in energy and ICT. The remaining reduction is due to the completion of the program's funding commitments to the construction of the National Institute for Nanotechnology.

There will also be a \$200 million investment in 2005-06 in the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research Endowment Fund managed by Alberta Finance. This is the first installment of a total \$500 million investment over the next three years. The additional investment will help ensure the long term value of the endowment and provide a sustainable increase in annual funding for research priorities outlined in *Growing our Future: A Life Sciences Strategy for Alberta*.

For information, contact Anne Douglas (780) 422-1562.

International and Intergovernmental Relations

The 2005-06 budget is \$10 million. The \$1.7 million increase over the 2004-05 forecast is largely to host the Western Premiers conference in Lloydminster in May and the Council of the Federation meeting in Banff in August. Other increases are provided for the operation of the Washington, D.C. office and for trade policy activities.

For information, contact Kathryn Wieggers (780) 422-2465.

Justice

Justice's 2005-06 program expense will be \$314.2 million, an increase of over \$20.7 million or 7.0 per cent from the 2004-05 forecast. By 2007-08, the Ministry's program expense will rise to \$335.3 million, a \$41.8 million or 14.2 per cent increase over three years.

In addition to funding previously provided to expand the number of courtrooms in Calgary to improve access and reduce the time to trial, Budget 2005 provides funding in excess of \$1 million per year over the next three years for the continued operation of these courtrooms.

\$12 million over three years will be provided for a one-window system to assist families accessing the family court system and to allow for improved access to the courts by reducing waiting times and increasing the availability of mediation and dispute resolution services.

For information, contact Mark Cooper (780) 427-8530.

Municipal Affairs

Municipal Affairs expense for 2005-06 is \$127 million, down \$23 million from the 2004-05 forecast of \$150 million. One-time costs of the 2004 disaster recovery programs were the primary reason for the high 2004-05 forecast.

The budget includes funds for ongoing programs to help Alberta's municipalities provide Albertans with sustainable, effective local government. It includes continuing funding to help municipalities prepare for, respond to and recover from major disasters and emergencies. Municipal Affairs also works to promote fire protection, and the department administers a province-wide safety system governed by the Alberta Safety Codes Act.

For information, contact Jay O'Neill (780) 422-8817.

Restructuring and Government Efficiency

The Ministry's 2005-06 program expense is \$80 million, an increase of \$28 million over the 2004-05 forecast of \$52 million. The \$28 million increase consists of:

- a \$27 million increase in amortization expense for Alberta SuperNet;
- a \$3 million increase for the new Opportunity and Restructuring Assessment Program; and
- a reduction of \$2 million related to a one-time 2004-05 expense in SuperNet and government network operations related to delays in SuperNet construction.

The Ministry's 2005-06 capital investment budget of \$3 million is \$40 million less than the 2004-05 forecast of \$43 million due to substantial completion of SuperNet.

For information, contact Lorelei Fiset-Cassidy (780) 644-7652.

Seniors and Community Supports

The Ministry's 2005-06 program expense budget is \$1.6 billion—an increase of \$176 million or 12.4 per cent over the 2004-05 forecast.

Additional information is available in a separate Budget 2005 news release from Alberta Seniors and Community Supports.

For more information, contact Jason Chance (780) 415-9950.

Solicitor General

Solicitor General's 2005-06 program expense will be \$405.2 million, a \$46.4 million or 12.9 per cent increase over the 2004-05 forecast. By 2007-08, the Ministry's program expense will rise to \$444.2 million,

an \$85.4 million or 23.8 per cent increase over three years.

Additional information is available in a separate Budget 2005 news release from Alberta Solicitor General.

For information, contact Annette Bidniak (780) 427-0900.

Sustainable Resource Development

The Ministry's 2005-06 program spending has been budgeted at \$225 million, an increase of \$20 million this year. Last year's budget was forecast at \$205 million, not including \$124 million in one-time disaster spending related to forest fires.

The increase in base funding in Budget 2005 will assist in aggressively countering mountain pine beetle infestation currently threatening Alberta's forests, as well as for enhanced outreach education, resource management and enforcement activities in the key areas of land, fish and wildlife. This budget also supports additional reforestation, along with product and market diversification, within Alberta's forestry industry.

New capital investment funding of \$52 million over the next three years will allow for the upgrading of the province's airtankers and airtanker bases, which are vital for effective and timely responses to wildfires.

For information, contact Donna Babchishin at (780) 427-8636.

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