

January 29, 2008

Alberta lays out 20-year strategic plan for infrastructure

Long term capital plan supports growth and prosperity for the province

Edmonton... Premier Ed Stelmach reinforced his commitment to address the infrastructure needs of today and the future with the release of government's 20-year strategy for capital projects.

"With forecasts indicating our economy will remain strong and our population will continue to grow, we have a responsibility to plan now for the infrastructure needs of tomorrow," said Premier Stelmach.

"This plan shows us that Albertans have every reason to be hopeful about the future. It shows we can build responsibly and put ourselves ahead of the growth curve. We don't ever want to be in a position of playing catch-up again. With this plan, building tomorrow begins today."

This 20-Year Strategic Capital Plan sets clear directions for infrastructure based on demographic and economic forecasts, the need for capital maintenance and renewal, and budget considerations. It also makes a clear commitment to environmentally friendly design and building practices.

"This first-ever 20-year infrastructure plan for Alberta responds to immediate and medium-term needs, envisions what will likely be required 20 years down the road, and initiates preparedness now," said Gene Zwozdesky, Associate Minister of Capital Planning and author of the plan. "With this blueprint we are addressing Alberta's infrastructure needs and securing Alberta's future."

Alberta has made significant progress on infrastructure needs over the past few years. Since the first three-year Capital Plan of \$5.5 billion was published in Budget 2003, the Capital Plan has grown to \$20.7 billion for 2007-10. Alberta's per capita spending on infrastructure remains at more than three times the average of other provinces. However, no previous infrastructure plan has looked 20 years ahead with this range and scope.

This 20-year plan anticipates the need to invest, on average, \$6 billion (\$2007) per year to meet short and medium-term objectives. It is not intended to reflect a comprehensive list of all projects to be built, although a number are mentioned. Specific projects and costs will continue to be part of the annual budgeting process. This plan captures eight specific areas, including: municipal infrastructure; provincial highway network, other transportation and corridors; health facilities; schools; post secondary; housing and government facilities; community facilities; and water and wastewater facilities.

"This plan also initiates a new monitoring and reporting process that commits our government to report progress on this plan annually," said Zwozdesky.

Alberta's 20-Year Strategic Capital Plan is an important part of Premier Stelmach's plan to secure Alberta's future by building communities, greening our growth, and creating opportunity.

Alberta's 20-Year Strategic Capital Plan is available at www.alberta.ca

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Backgrounder: Alberta's 20-Year Strategic Capital Plan: highlights of short-term and medium-term priorities

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Alberta's 20-Year Strategic Capital Plan: highlights of short-term and medium-term priorities

The 20-Year Strategic Capital Plan is a blueprint to guide future decisions about infrastructure projects. It also includes a number of specific projects that will proceed in the short term (as immediately as possible) and in the medium term.

In the longer term, it reflects a vision of project objectives for what will be needed based on current trends and predictions.

Municipal Infrastructure

- Alberta will provide long-term flexible funding giving municipalities a solid foundation.
- Grant programs will continue to support essential municipal infrastructure and capital projects.
- The provincial government will:
 - place a high priority on facilitating regional cooperation among municipalities, particularly when it involves regional planning for infrastructure and transportation;
 - work with the regional board created to build the Capital Region's comprehensive industrial development plan as part of the government's response to the *Capital Region Integrated Growth Management Plan*;
 - work with the Calgary Regional Partnership to facilitate cooperation in that region;
 - play a role in supporting the necessary infrastructure in Alberta's Industrial Heartland;
 - play a key role in supporting high-growth areas such as Wood Buffalo;
 - work closely with municipalities to expand public transportation and rapid transit, particularly in major metropolitan centres; and,
 - continue providing sustainable and flexible funding to municipalities to allow them to respond to changing circumstances and to meet the most pressing needs in their communities.
- The Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) established in Budget 2007, will deliver a 10-year program totaling almost \$10.8 billion in capital support.
 - This historic funding arrangement, ushered in by Premier Stelmach, will provide municipalities with more flexibility as to how they spend their MSI funds in subsequent years. It fulfills the Premier's commitment to all Alberta municipalities to address growth pressures.
 - Funding will ramp up to \$1.4 billion per year by 2010-11.
- Several other municipal grant programs support local capital infrastructure in addition to the MSI.

Provincial Highway Network, Other Transportation, and Corridors

- The vision is to have a fully integrated, world-class transportation system.
- The government will place a high priority on strategic investments in our highway network.
- New roads and highway infrastructure such as overpasses and bridges will be developed to accommodate current and future growth.
- New routes will reduce the strain on existing routes.
- Roads will be widened and twinned where required to improve safety.
- Interchanges will be added or upgraded on major highways to smooth traffic flow.
- The plan outlines the Alberta government's commitment to complete ring roads in Calgary and Edmonton, and calls for land negotiations to commence now for outer freeways.

- Work will continue on twinning several sections of Highway 63 to Fort McMurray to improve traffic safety and support the industrial development in the oil sands. The first segment, from Highway 69 to south of Highway 881, should be open to traffic by fall 2008.
- Improvement projects such as paving and widening will continue on portions of the northeast transportation corridor, particularly in the Wood Buffalo region.
- Work to enhance the north-south trade corridor will continue, including work to achieve freeway status between Edmonton and Calgary, upgrading of the QE2 Highway to six lanes, and further four-laning of sections of Highway 43 to the British Columbia border.
- Alberta will continue to upgrade and expand provincial roads that support agriculture and other resource industries.
- By fall 2009, a continuous divided highway between the Alberta-Montana border and Grande Prairie will be available.
- Further work and/or new infrastructure will help the movement of goods, including the Port Alberta plans (near the Edmonton International Airport) and enhanced links to Prince Rupert's deep-sea port.
- While aviation and rail are primarily federal government responsibilities, the Government of Alberta supports community airports and will investigate and plan for passenger rail options that provide commuter-type services.
- Improved north-south railway service will be pursued to create more competitive and efficient transportation options for Alberta exporters.
- Highway 16 and Highway 1 will be upgraded to freeway status.

Health Facilities

- Alberta's population is expected to reach five-million people by 2028. The following objectives will be key for quality health services:
 - provide new and expanded health care facilities where they are needed to meet the demands of a growing population;
 - respond to the changing needs of an aging population;
 - respond to changing chronic disease patterns and a growing incidence of cancer;
 - support innovative approaches to health care, such as telehealth delivery and provincial electronic health records;
 - maintain and renew existing facilities; and,
 - expand treatment options for Albertans who suffer from addictions and mental illness
- Some of the major projects supported as priorities in this strategic capital plan include:
 - South Calgary Health Campus;
 - Edmonton Clinic;
 - Grande Prairie Hospital (the Peace Country Regional Health Centre);
 - Medicine Hat Regional Hospital;
 - Radiation Therapy Corridor - new cancer radiation centres in Lethbridge, Grande Prairie and Red Deer; and improved access for radiation patients in the Capital Health and Calgary Health regions;
 - more spaces for addictions treatment;
 - more accommodation for Long-Term Care;
 - redeveloping the Peter Lougheed Centre in Calgary;
 - upgrades to the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton;
 - complete Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre expansion; and,
 - new health facilities in Strathcona, Fort Saskatchewan and Wood Buffalo.
- Capital strategies will be linked to achieving specific health outcomes and will include:
 - treating chronic disease such as cancer and diabetes;
 - expanding health services for seniors;
 - expanding access to health services; and
 - expanding access to treatment.
- Partnership arrangements between health authorities and the private and voluntary sectors for

providing long-term care infrastructure will continue to be used where they demonstrate cost-effectiveness.

Schools

- Overall, the objectives over the next 20 years are to:
 - provide schools close to where students live (particularly in high growth communities), and meet the needs of Alberta's growing student population;
 - explore alternative options for providing Career and Technology Studies (CTS) including additional mobile CTS labs and proposals for regional skill centres;
 - increase steel-framed modular classroom use to provide flexibility and respond to a growing population; and,
 - expand our investment in capital maintenance and renewal to maintain the quality of Alberta's schools.
- In the short term, dozens of new schools will be built and several major modernization projects undertaken, including 18 new schools to be opened in 2008-09 in communities across the province.
- In the medium term, we anticipate building five to seven new kindergarten to grade 12 schools each year.

Post-Secondary Facilities

- Key objectives for the post-secondary component of this strategic capital plan include:
 - expanding access to meet the projected demand in the Alberta Access Plan;
 - ensuring the necessary capital maintenance and renewal of existing and planned post-secondary facilities;
 - developing and enhancing technology programs to meet the demands of an increasing number of students and employers; and,
 - addressing key workforce challenges particularly in the health care field.
- Examples of major projects supported in the short term include:
 - Bow Valley College Redevelopment – to be completed September 2008;
 - University of Alberta Centennial Centre for Interdisciplinary Science – located within the Faculty of Science, scheduled to open in 2010;
 - University of Calgary Institute for Sustainable Energy, Environment and Economy (ISEEE);
 - The Edmonton Clinic (800 student spaces for health sciences);
 - University of Calgary Digital Library Project;
 - University of Lethbridge Markin Building – will house the School of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Management; and,
 - Medicine Hat College –renovate and expand the F-Wing, the Power Engineering area and the trades and technology training area;
 - SAIT Trades and Technologies Complex;
 - Athabasca University redevelopment and expansion;
 - Grande Prairie Regional College renovation;
 - University of Alberta Health Research Innovation Facility (addition of labs and research facilities).
- To meet the high demand for technical trades training, capital projects over the medium term will add thousands of student spaces required to fuel Alberta's future economic growth. The capital plan will also:
 - address the increasing need for more well-educated and highly skilled health employees across the province by expanding training facilities for the health workforce;
 - provide new spaces in arts, science and research programs; and,
 - maintain and improve post-secondary facilities across the province to ensure they provide a suitable, high quality environment for post-secondary studies.

Housing and Provincial Government Projects

- Key objectives for this component of the strategic capital plan include:
 - more affordable and subsidized housing;
 - facilitating development of an adequate supply of supportive living and long-term care facilities for seniors and persons with disabilities, and barrier-free housing;
 - providing the necessary court houses, police training facilities, and correctional facilities to enhance Albertans' safety; and,
 - increasing the province's financial commitment to capital maintenance and renewal by setting aside a percentage of annual capital spending for maintenance projects.
- In the short term, the investment priority will focus on meeting Albertans' needs for affordable housing and providing government facilities that support important public programs and services.
- The Alberta government has committed to an affordable housing strategy that will support development of 11,000 affordable housing units over the next five years, in response to the Alberta Affordable Housing Task Force report.
- In the medium term, priority will be placed on housing, government facilities, safety and security, and capital maintenance and renewal. This includes:
 - ensuring adequate funds are available in the Alberta government's Affordable Housing Program;
 - supporting construction of new affordable housing units in Alberta's municipalities and providing additional funds to maintain existing units and provide temporary shelter for Albertans who need this assistance;
 - increasing funding to support seniors' housing;
 - ensuring adequate office space for Alberta government employees;
 - ensuring that necessary court facilities are in place;
 - developing a redevelopment plan for the Government Centre Legislature precinct to improve functionality and the aesthetics of our provincial capital's centre;
 - ensuring that necessary correctional facilities and police training facilities are in place to improve the safety and security of Albertans;
 - implementing new technologies to link share information between Justice and public safety organizations;
 - implementing a new information system to streamline business processes and replace aging legacy systems to create a more secure and effective system for the courts; and
 - ensuring adequate funding is available for regular maintenance of Alberta's public infrastructure.

Community Facilities

- Maintaining and renewing Alberta's arts and heritage sites, museums and sport and recreation facilities as well as preserving the natural landscape are important to Alberta's future and are included in this 20-year strategic capital plan.
- As Alberta moves into the future, other cultural acquisitions will be made, and facilities will be required.
- Investments that support Albertans' health and wellness through sport and recreation facilities will also be important.
- Through current and future grant programs the Alberta government will support major community facilities as well as community organizations and public-use facilities across the province.
- Alberta's library network will continue to be strengthened.
- Albertans spend the most money per capita of all Canadians on cultural goods, services and activities including live performances and admissions to museums. Provincial historic sites, museums and interpretive centers received more than 900,000 visits to contemporary and interactive exhibits and services.
- Infrastructure planning will support efforts to develop marketable tourism destinations in both urban and rural Alberta such as museums, recreation facilities and arts and cultural facilities.
- Objectives include:
 - Build a culturally vibrant and healthy Alberta and support Alberta's new Cultural Policy;

- strengthen Alberta communities; and
- diversify Alberta's economy through the tourism and cultural industry.
- In the short term, the provincial government will invest in various community facilities or capital program projects throughout the province focusing on:
 - arts and culture;
 - sport, recreation and leisure activities;
 - agricultural facilities;
 - tourism;
 - museums and historic sites;
 - libraries;
 - parks and protected areas; and,
 - numerous other major community facilities
- In the medium term, provincial support for our parks, community and cultural facilities will be required to maintain and enhance Albertan's quality of life and to sustain and improve Alberta's attractiveness as a tourism destination.
- Alberta will:
 - enhance tourism and protect the environment while improving recreational opportunities;
 - continue to support the development of parks and recreation areas within major urban centres;
 - support the development and maintenance of government-owned Alberta arts and cultural facilities by undertaking projects like completing the second phase of renovations at Alberta's Jubilee Auditoria; and
 - maintain and upgrade provincial parks across the province to ensure they provide a high quality recreation experience for Albertans and tourists alike.

Water and Wastewater Facilities

- Key objectives for this 20-year strategic capital plan include:
 - ensuring that Albertans continue to have access to a safe and secure supply of drinking water;
 - maintaining and protecting Alberta's aquatic ecosystems;
 - working with municipalities, urban and rural, to support regional water systems and partnerships;
 - supporting irrigation plans to maintain sufficient water supplies important to sustaining the agriculture industry;
 - facilitating ongoing work on implementing Alberta's *Water for Life* strategy; and
 - making the investments to ensure the integrity of the Eastern Slopes watershed
- In the short term, the provincial government will support various water and wastewater management programs. Financial support will also be provided to continue implementing Alberta's Water for Life Strategy with focus on achieving three crucial outcomes:
 - a safe and secure drinking water supply;
 - healthy aquatic ecosystems; and,
 - reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy.

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