

April 7, 2009

Investing in health care and education remains a top priority in Budget 2009

Budget 2009 highlights:

- **Health and Wellness spending is budgeted at \$12.9 billion. This includes:**
 - **\$7.7 billion in operating funding to Alberta Health Services for the delivery of health services across the province, which is a \$550 million, or almost an eight per cent, increase from 2008-09 (excluding one-time assistance); and**
 - **\$238 million in infrastructure support for capital projects in addition to approximately \$1.5 billion in cash capital reserves already with Alberta Health Services. Support for capital projects increases to over \$1 billion in 2010-11 and \$1.2 billion in 2011-12.**
- **Kindergarten to Grade 12 spending is budgeted at nearly \$6.2 billion, including:**
 - **\$5.4 billion in operating support to school boards and other educational support — an increase of \$165 million or 3.2 per cent; and**
 - **\$760 million for school capital projects, including \$252 million for capital maintenance renewal.**
- **Advanced Education and Technology spending is budgeted at \$3.1 billion, including:**
 - **\$2.65 billion in operating support, an increase of \$88 million or 3.4 per cent; and**
 - **\$484 million for capital grants, including \$121 million for capital maintenance and renewal.**

Edmonton... With a combined total of \$22.2 billion invested in health care and education in Budget 2009, the Alberta government continues its focus on strengthening the programs and services that are priorities for Albertans in these difficult times.

Building a more accessible and effective health care system

With a budgeted program expense of \$12.9 billion for Health and Wellness in 2009, the Alberta government reaffirms its commitment to increasing access to quality health care while improving the effectiveness of health care service delivery.

“Despite challenging economic times, this is a good news budget,” said Health and Wellness Minister Ron Liepert. “We are maintaining our spending from last year and are also able to give Alberta Health Services an increase of \$550 million or almost eight per cent to continue providing quality patient care to Albertans.”

Albertans will benefit from funding increases in the areas of physician services, building safe communities, continuing care initiatives and cancer therapy drugs.

Health and Wellness spending in 2009-10 includes:

- \$7.7 billion in operating funding to Alberta Health Services, which includes \$133 million for the provision of emergency medical services that were transferred from municipalities effective April 1.
- \$3 billion for physician services, an increase of \$365 million, or 14 per cent, including funding to support physician compensation, on-call programs, office computerization, primary care and Academic Alternate Relationship Plans. The increases give Alberta physicians among the highest overall compensation program in Canada.
- \$42 million for Safe Communities' initiatives such as comprehensive addiction prevention in schools, Family Violence Court treatment programs and substance abuse prevention for Aboriginal children and youth.
- \$41 million to implement the new Continuing Care Strategy including enhancing the home-care program and transition services to help seniors and persons with disabilities return to their communities.
- \$94 million for cancer therapy drugs — a \$16-million or 20-per-cent increase, including funding for Avastin for the treatment of advanced colorectal cancer.
- \$101 million for medical residents' compensation, an increase of \$14 million, or 15 per cent, including increases in the number of residents.
- \$238 million in infrastructure support for capital projects which will supplement the approximately \$1.5 billion in cash capital reserves already with Alberta Health Services. Support for capital projects increases to over \$1 billion in 2010-11 and \$1.2 billion in 2011-12.
- Provincial assistance for chiropractic services is being eliminated, effective summer 2009. The impact will result in a maximum cost shift to Albertans of \$200 annually. Alberta will be one of seven provinces, including Ontario and Quebec, that does not fund this service.

Government continues to make meaningful investments in education

"The education of young Albertans is the most important investment that we can make as a government and this budget ensures that we maintain and build on our existing supports for areas such as upgrading Career and Technology Studies equipment, technology innovation and high school completion," said Education Minister Dave Hancock.

For the fiscal year 2009-10, operating support for Alberta's Kindergarten to Grade 12 will be \$5.4 billion, an increase of \$165 million. This amount does not include \$190 million in school property taxes collected by opted-out school boards. On average, school boards will see an increase of 3.8 per cent in their budgets for the 2009-10 school year. Overall, our government will be investing \$31.7 million in students every school day.

To ensure Alberta's students have safe and well-maintained learning environments, the budget also includes, as part of the capital plan, \$760 million for new and existing school infrastructure, with more than 17,000 new student spaces created by September 2010.

"As well, our business plan emphasizes our focus on students, particularly our First Nation, Métis and Inuit populations, reaffirming our commitment to ensure all students can reach their potential and are prepared to make good choices as young adults," Hancock added.

Strategic, long-term investments in advanced education

Advanced Education and Technology's 2009-10 program expense is budgeted at more than \$3.1 billion, which includes \$2.65 billion in operating support and \$484 million in capital support. Operating funding in 2009-10 represents an increase of \$88 million or 3.4 per cent from the 2008-09 budget forecast.

Over the past five years, Alberta post-secondary institutions have received a 34-per-cent increase in their operational budgets, which has helped expand and enhance program delivery and strengthen Campus Alberta.

“Strategic, long-term funding for Alberta’s post-secondary system is one of the best investments that either a government, or a student can make,” said Doug Horner, Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. “To continue our commitment to make the post-secondary system accessible and affordable, we’re providing the six-per-cent base operating grant increase and upholding our Affordability Framework, which includes our tuition-fee policy.”

Total funding for student assistance is \$170 million to further government’s commitment to address accessibility and ensure that Alberta is one of the most affordable provinces in Canada to obtain a post-secondary education.

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