

# **Alberta's Rural Development Strategy**

**Current and Emerging Initiatives  
2010 Update**

**Government  
of Alberta ■**



## INTRODUCTION

*A Place to Grow*, Alberta's Rural Development Strategy, reinforces the province's commitment to rural Alberta and focuses the provincial government's collective efforts on ensuring rural Albertans are able to contribute to and share in Alberta's prosperity and quality of life. Ministries across government have incorporated elements of the strategy into their business planning process and many have outlined significant rural development investments in their business plans and budgets. An Assistant Deputy Minister Committee on Rural Development monitored and provided a coordinated response on priority initiatives.

All government Ministries have contributed information to the 2010 *Update* report.

### Strategy Pillars

*Alberta's Rural Development Strategy* identified four pillars essential for sustainable rural communities:

**Economic growth** – providing opportunities for rural communities to develop strong economies

**Community capacity, quality of life and infrastructure** – ensuring that rural communities have the capacity, the quality of life and the infrastructure necessary to remain vibrant and attractive places to live, work and visit

**Health Care** – making sure people in rural Alberta have access to quality health services, providing opportunities to develop the economic potential of health care services

**Learning and Skill Development** - providing excellent schools, access to the best possible education and expanding opportunities in local communities for people to get the skills they need to compete and succeed in the marketplace.

# Economic Growth

## Current Initiatives

- *Alberta's Action Plan: Bringing Technology to Market* provides enhanced support for regional business services in rural areas through three programs: the Alberta Innovation Voucher (AIV) program, the Youth Technopreneurship (YT) program, and the growth of regional business development centres located in Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Calgary and Edmonton.
- Strategic partnerships between Aboriginal organizations, industry and governments to enhance Aboriginal participation in the economy include:
  - Aboriginal Economic Partnerships provide Aboriginal communities and organizations with funding and advisory support to build capacity leading to employment and business development opportunities in the Alberta economy.
  - Providing over \$1.5 Million to the Métis Nation of Alberta Association (MNAA) for capacity development (economic development, improving educational attainment and employment opportunities, etc.) Each of the six MNAA regions covers large rural areas of the province.
- Agricultural entrepreneurs receive assistance to identify and realize new opportunities in value-added agricultural products and markets resulting in economic growth for the individual, the industry and surrounding communities.
- To ensure Alberta's labour force requirements are met, the GOA is:
  - Working with business and industry to improve the recruitment, retention, skill development and productivity of the labour force, and to support inter-provincial and international migration to address skills and labour shortages.
  - Leading on initiatives that help employers find workers, retain workers, understand the value of workforce development and address workforce adjustment issues.
  - Partnering with industry to promote industry-specific career paths and career planning tools,
  - Partnering with regional economic development organizations, including Regional Economic Development Alliances, to build community capacity related to labour force planning and development.
  - Promoting awareness, understanding and accommodation of diversity in the workplace by working with employers to create inclusive workplaces.
- Through the *Alberta Competitiveness Initiative*, the overall competitive performance of the province as well as that of four sectors of the economy - agriculture (grains and oil seeds); financial services, manufacturing and petrochemicals - will be reviewed. This work benefits rural communities as government and industry work together to ensure Alberta remains one of the most competitive jurisdictions in the world.
  - The *Manufacturing Sector Review* examines issues pertaining to feedstock supply and access, fiscal and regulatory environment, capital and operating costs, and transportation competitiveness, leading to recommendations that may considerably impact the petrochemical/chemical industry located primarily in the rural areas of Joffre and Prentice.
  - The *Forest Industry Competitiveness Review* identifies roads and bridges throughout Alberta that are capable of carrying larger trucks that can transport more wood products at one time, lowering transportation costs. In addition the GOA is investing \$83 million over two years under the *Roads to Resources Program* to enhance Alberta's highway network. The GOA will continue to work with industry through the *Log Haul Program* to maximize payloads.
- A partnership with Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association will identify and establish pipeline corridors in the Alberta's Industrial Heartland to accommodate the pipeline infrastructure needed for prospective developments in this area.
- The Peace Region Economic Development Alliance (PREDA) is receiving GOA assistance in its efforts to secure meaningful and measureable progress with Canadian National (CN) Rail, including a GOA submission to the Federal Railway Level of Service review panel.
- The GOA is working with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and/or communities to further develop specific industry sectors. This includes:

- the aerospace and defense industry sector (e.g., SMEs in Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Red Deer and around the military bases at Cold Lake, Wainwright, and Suffield)
  - the unmanned vehicle system industry through the Canadian Centre for Unmanned Vehicle Systems (e.g., communities of Medicine Hat, Foremost, and Grande Prairie)
  - the metal fabrication and machinery manufacturing (MFMM) sector (e.g., SMEs in Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Red Deer, and Grande Prairie).
- The Alberta Competitiveness Council is conducting a review of the overall competitive performance of the province as well as of four sectors of the economy: agriculture (grains and oil seeds); financial services, manufacturing and petrochemicals. The result of this work will benefit rural communities across the province as government and industry work together to ensure Alberta remains one of the most competitive jurisdictions in the world.
  - Priority projects under *Productivity Alberta* (PA) in rural Alberta include the completion of regional productivity assessments and the establishment of regional networks. PA is a connection point for small and medium-size Alberta companies and offers access to the tools, resources, and services that can help them improve their productivity and strengthen their competitiveness.
  - Thirteen Regional Economic Development Alliances (REDAs), in partnership with 260 rural communities and numerous other stakeholders, enable strategic regional economic planning, information sharing and implementation of priority projects to ensure economic sustainability and resiliency in rural Alberta.
  - The *Business Link*, a federal-provincial partnership, continues to deliver business information and advisory services to entrepreneurs and small and medium sized businesses across the province, including in rural regions.
  - Support priority economic development initiatives in rural Alberta through the Regions in Transition grants program and work of the Rural Communities Adaptation unit.
  - Continue to provide Alberta communities with timely economic information to support their planning and decision making processes.
  - A three year *Rural Community Adaptation Program*, funded through the national Community Development Trust, provided \$13.6 million in grants to support rural communities and regions to transition and adapt, resulting in greater resilience and new, more diverse economic opportunities. Funding commitments finalized early 2011.
  - The *Final Mile Broadband initiative* provides access to high speed broadband services for those Albertans living in the rural part of the province that do not currently have access to high speed broadband services. For many Albertans, the ability to do business in the global economy; communicate digitally; collaborate globally; access goods and services electronically; transact day to day business over the Internet; and access an ever increasing range of electronic government services, is key to sustaining and building Alberta's advantage.
  - Tourism initiatives that promote economic growth and diversification include:
    - A provincial Tourism Trail Mapping Program to increase awareness of motorized and non-motorized trails.
    - Tourism product/theme gap analyses and feasibility studies for the Beaver Hills (east of Edmonton), Alberta's northeast region (Lakeland), Alberta's southwest region and Kalyna Country.
    - Assessing the feasibility of facilitating private sector opportunities in Dinosaur Provincial Park and Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park, in partnership with the Canadian Badlands Ltd
    - The Visitor Friendly Community Assessment Program which was piloted in Drumheller (2007), undertaken in Crowsnest Pass (2010) and is planned for Peace River.
    - Investment attraction activities such as missions to China, rural tourism investment opportunity studies and posting commercial tourism investment opportunities in Alberta communities on the Department's web site and the Regional Investment Opportunities Booklet.
  - The GOA continues to advocate for more Open Skies air service agreements to create opportunities for tourism, trade and investment by businesses and communities across Alberta.
  - A range of information and advisory services are provided to entrepreneurs, developers and communities regarding tourism development projects in Alberta and, to visitors seeking information about the province through the ten Travel Alberta Information Centres.

- Under the *Land Use Framework Initiative*, led by the Land Use Secretariat, many GOA ministries are developing regional plans for the Lower Athabasca and South Saskatchewan Regions. The regional plans will set out broad provincial expectations for each region. Municipal plans and bylaws will be required to be consistent with the regional plans. The Alberta Economic Development Authority is considering a possible role in looking at the economic impacts of setting aside green space in the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan.
- Infrastructure improvements such as wildlife-friendly fences, irrigation redevelopment and development of trails, stock water sources and new pastures on the 32 provincial grazing reserves are made possible through the *Provincial Grazing Reserve Multiple-use Reconstruction Program* in partnership with the federal Western Economic Diversification Community Development Fund.
- A *Municipal Sustainability Strategy* is being developed to help municipalities to address their long-term sustainability and success. Enhanced tools will allow communities to look closely at their strengths and assets, to identify challenges and to help them develop appropriate responses.
- Implementation of the *Transportation Routing and Vehicle Information System (TRAVIS)* will continue. A one-stop-shop commercial vehicle permitting system is being developed to allow industry to obtain permits on provincial and municipal highways. This system will allow municipalities to automate their permitting system and collect their portion of the revenue.

## Emerging Initiatives

- Access to Alberta's research and innovation community will be increased through Alberta Innovates *Connector Service* - a one-window approach offering system-wide online information sharing and business tools for businesses, entrepreneurs, researchers, investors, and business service providers.
- GOA will work with Alberta's industry associations and employers to enable them to meet their workforce requirements. Implementation of the *Foreign Qualification Recognition Plan* will maximize the contribution of foreign-trained professionals, including foreign-trained Canadians, to Alberta's labour force.
- Support the *Social Based Assistance Review* through the provision of financial and other supports to enable low income Albertans to meet their basic needs.
- Support the settlement and integration of newcomers into Alberta's communities and workplaces.
- Support the development of rail access to oil sands plants in rural areas north of Fort McMurray.
- Alberta Community Profile (formerly AlbertaFirst.com) will provide a web portal for Alberta communities to develop and maintain consistent, relevant Community Profiles for business, tourism and resident attraction purposes.
- Work with the forest sector and industry to develop a strategic vision that will capitalize on new markets and products to improve competitiveness of the industry, and bring economic benefits to forest communities. Encourage new uses for mountain pine beetle-killed wood, including bioenergy products from forest waste.
- Develop and implement tourism initiatives in rural Alberta to diversify tourism products and experience. This includes trail development along abandoned railway right of way, culinary tourism, sustainable tourism, festival and event mentorship program, and educational tourism. Identify potential commercial tourism development opportunities in Provincial Parks, in keeping with the direction set in the 10-year Plan for Parks.
- A *Tourism Development Strategy* will focus on the supply-side of the equation, and ensure Alberta has the tourism product, destinations and experiences that Albertans and non-Albertan visitors are seeking. A cross-government approach to support tourism is an important foundational element for the Strategy.

## Community Capacity, Quality of Life and Infrastructure

### Current Initiatives

- Under the *Roles and Mandates Policy Framework* for Alberta's publicly funded advanced education system, Alberta's Comprehensive Community Institutions have been given a renewed mandate to work closely with municipalities, employers, industry and the community adult learning system in their service regions to enhance adult access to foundational, literacy, post-secondary, and lifelong learning opportunities.
- Work with community adult learning providers to develop a data and research strategy and mechanisms that will better track learners and their transitions from informal community-based learning opportunities to more formal post-secondary education and training, and to better identify program and policy gaps.
- Provide funding to 200 community adult learning and literacy organizations across the province to build capacity and address community needs through non-credit learning opportunities (e.g., adult basic literacy, family literacy, essential skills and ESL)
- Provide funding to the Innovative Communities Connecting and Networking (iCCAN) project to connect Community Adult Learning Councils, literacy organizations and volunteer centres via the SuperNet to each other and to Comprehensive Community Institutions. As the iCCAN project evolves, it aims to leverage its significant video-conferencing technology infrastructure to increase the availability and quality of credit and non-credit learning opportunities in rural and remote communities, and create clear pathways for learners to post-secondary institutions.
- The *Alberta Addiction and Mental Health Strategy* (to be completed March 2011) sets the direction for addiction and mental health priorities and services within the province. The Strategy will guide Alberta Health Services and its partners in comprehensive operational planning.
- Support the development of information and communication technology infrastructure in Aboriginal communities to enhance access to education, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, working in partnership with industry, Aboriginal communities and organizations.
- Provide agricultural extension services to producers and processors through 13 field office and the Ag-Info Center. Provide \$8.76 million to 296 Agricultural Societies to enhance quality of life for agriculture and rural communities, and \$10.5 million to 70 Agriculture Service Boards to deliver on legislated activities (including the Weed Control Act).
- Work with communities, youth, rural stakeholders and educational institutions to increase rural Alberta's leadership capacity to help them address complex local issues.
- Work with the University of Alberta, Augustana Campus, to pilot and extend rural post-secondary student internships to rural communities.
- Explore opportunity to work with youth organizations to encourage more youth to become actively involved in their communities (e.g., Alberta Global Youth Service Day - Volunteer Challenge and Youth Volunteerism and the Youth Mentor Programs)
- A three year *Rural Connections: Community Broadband Infrastructure Pilot Program*, funded through the national Community Development Trust, provided \$10.4 million in grants to community-led broadband projects that provide broadband coverage to un-served and underserved areas of rural Alberta. Funding commitments finalized in early 2011.
- Continue to develop Alberta's cultural industry through expansion of a multi-year funding model. Implement a simplified application process for Alberta Foundation for the Arts. Continue to promotion of Arts Days. Work with new media, book and magazine publishers and sound recording companies
- Work in partnership with the nonprofit/voluntary sector to strengthen both sector capacity and Alberta's communities (e.g. through the Alberta Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector Initiative); strengthen cross-ministry

collaboration to leverage opportunities and support for the nonprofit/voluntary sector. Continue to provide targeted financial support programs.

- Collaborate with other ministries, communities and organizations to further develop and enhance public engagement and participation processes, practices and resources.
- In direct response to Alberta's Rural Development Strategy, two Regional Economic Development Alliances (Palliser Economic Partnership and Battle River Alliance for Economic Development) have provided learning opportunities for leaders, in the form of Symposia that focus on issues in economic development, community development and workforce skills.
- Continue to implement the *Safe Communities* to promote strong and vibrant communities and reduce crime so Albertans feel safe.
- Continue to collaborate with partners (e.g., Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Human Rights Commission) to promote the development of welcoming and inclusive communities, and work towards combating racism and discrimination through the Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination.
- Provide supports to those affected by family violence through victims outreach sites; pilot the family violence and bullying training curriculum with front-line responders and further develop public awareness and education resources
- Under the *Alberta Mentoring Partnership*, 29 partners (government ministries, government-funded organizations, community agencies and youth representation), work to raise the profile of mentoring in Alberta, and better support at-risk youth through mentoring.
- The *Breakfast Clubs of Canada - First Nations and Métis Settlements Initiative* financially supports a school-based breakfast program and promotes awareness about the importance of a healthy breakfast for children.
- Implement year two of the *Women's Shelter Child Care Program* to maintain the existing 270 spaces in 25 shelters created in year one.
- The Cross-Ministry Committee for Early Childhood Development (ECD) established strategic directions to support a collaborative and cohesive approach to early childhood development. This includes integrating government policies to support ECD at the community level; creating a seamless network of ECD programs and services for children birth to six and their families in Alberta; and ensuring that programs and services are accessible, efficient and timely.
- Promote excellence in child care settings through accreditation. Accredited programs can receive program and staff support funding which is vital in rural and small communities where resources, staff recruitment and retention are often a challenge. The on-line Child Care Orientation Course is available with tutor supports at no cost to persons actively employed in a provincially licensed or regulated child care program in Alberta.
- Continue to support the *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Service Network Program* which provides a single point of entry for individuals and families seeking assistance for those affected by FASD across the province.
- Provide funding to support local preventive social services, in partnership with 317 municipalities and Métis Settlements organized within 201 Family and Community Support Services Programs across Alberta.
- Provide information and supports to parents through 46 Parent Link Centres in over 160 communities in the key areas of early childhood development, parent education, family support, information and referral, and developmental screening.
- Promote safe, healthy and productive workplaces, as well as fair, equitable and stable labour relations and employment standards environments to ensure fair, safe and healthy work environments for Alberta's workers.
- Continue to transition to an outcomes-focused *cumulative effects management system* that addresses the impacts of development and ongoing activities on land, air, water and biodiversity on a regional level.
  - Under the *Climate Change Strategy*, provide support and build capacity with AUMA and AAMCD through a Municipal Climate Change Action Center grant to reduce GHG's at the municipal and county level.



- Under *Water for Life Strategy*, work with partners to develop Conservation Efficiency Productivity (CEP) Sector Plans and targets. Completed plans with a rural focus include a CEP Plan for the irrigation sector (Alberta Irrigation Program Association) and a CEP Plan for the urban municipal sector (Alberta Urban Municipalities Association).
  - Initiatives under *Too Good To Waste Strategy*, Alberta's road map for waste reduction and management, include amendments to the Tire Designation Regulation to include a wider range of tires under the provincial recycling program, expansion of the regulated electronics recycling program to include more products, regionalization of waste management infrastructure (not only landfills, but transfer stations, materials recovery) and improving design and operational requirements for landfills.
  - Renewal of the *Clean Air Strategy* could include a collaborative process to identify and address any gaps in the management of air quality, development of provincial or regional management frameworks for emerging air quality issues and raising awareness, and education about non-point sources throughout the province.
- Ensure the environmental infrastructure (the facilities, equipment and associated monitoring and management systems) required for the protection and wise use of water, land, air and ecosystems, the management of waste and environmental hazards management, is developed and maintained. For rural Alberta, the focus is primarily on waste, wastewater, and water.
  - Under the *Affordable Housing Program*, over \$340 million has been committed since 2002/2003 to support the development of nearly 4,400 affordable housing units in rural Alberta communities.
    - In 2009/2010, rural communities received over \$57.6 million in one-time capital funding assistance to contribute to the development of over 640 affordable housing units.
    - In 2010/2011, over \$23.7 million was directed to capital investment partnerships for the development of over 290 affordable housing units in rural communities.
  - Project Delivery Branch, Alberta Infrastructure is currently working on 16 infrastructure projects in rural Alberta with a total project cost in excess of \$150 million.
  - Many of the units built or upgraded under the *Affordable Supportive Living Initiative* (ASLI) are located in rural Alberta. Provision of accommodation in combination with health and personal care services will help seniors remain in their communities.
  - Effective June 30, 2010, Albertans have access to consolidated and consistent information about social-based programs through the Alberta Supports Contact Centre (1-877-644-9992) or the Alberta Supports Web Portal at [www.albertasupports.ca](http://www.albertasupports.ca).
    - Supported Access Sites have been implemented in two rural Alberta locations in Killam (Flagstaff County) and Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement to test effectiveness of simplified access. Here the public can use a computer terminal, supported by trained non-government staff providing navigational support, to access the web portal and contact centre.
  - The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) has regional offices throughout Alberta, including St. Paul, Grande Prairie, Red Deer and Medicine Hat. The OPG also provides funding to several agencies throughout Alberta to assist Albertans complete forms and documents.
  - Wildfire and Pest Management Programs such as FireSmart and mountain pine beetle projects has helped improve community and industry safety. Other funds assist local governments to manage beetle infestations on private land.
  - The connectivity of Alberta's communities, in support the province's economic and social growth, is ensured through the construction and maintenance of a provincial highway network. Rural communities can access various provincial and federal grant programs for municipal infrastructure needs, such as construction and rehabilitation of local roads and bridges, water/wastewater treatment systems, community airports and other core infrastructure.
  - Sixteen Regional Traffic Safety Coordinators are located across the province to implement and support local grass roots traffic safety initiatives under *Alberta's Traffic Safety Plan: Saving Lives on Alberta's Roads (TSP)*. The TSP outlines key initiatives to help prevent motor vehicle collisions, build safer roads, establish and enforce traffic laws, and better educate all Albertans about traffic safety.
  - The *Comprehensive Regional Infrastructure Sustainability Plan (CRISP)* for the Athabasca Oil Sands Area is a long-term (35 year), adaptable infrastructure plan outlining future infrastructure requirements to support

responsible economic growth, a reduced environmental footprint and a high quality of life for workers and their families as a result of the continued development of Alberta's oil sands.

- A new *Comprehensive Regional Infrastructure Sustainability Plan (CRISP)* is currently being developed for the Cold Lake Oil Sands Area.
- The *Regional Collaboration Program (RCP)* supports activities that improve the viability and long-term sustainability of municipalities through regional collaboration and capacity building. The RCP is comprised of four components: Regional Collaboration, Mediation and Cooperative Processes, Municipal Internship, and Strategic Initiatives.
- The proposed *Municipal Sustainability Strategy*, a long-term framework to help ensure Alberta's municipalities are able to deliver well-managed, collaborative and accountable local government to Albertans, includes a self-assessment toolkit for municipalities and an inventory of resources to help them promote sustainable governance in their communities.
- The *Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI)* is the Province of Alberta's commitment to provide significant long-term funding to enhance municipal sustainability, and to enable municipalities to meet the demands of growth. Under the MSI, \$400 million was provided to municipalities in 2007, \$500 million in 2008, \$400 million in 2009 and an additional \$876 million in 2010. Of the total MSI funding provided each year, \$50 million is allocated to conditional operating projects. The remainder is to be applied to qualifying capital projects.
- The *Municipal Internship Program* is designed to attract recent post-secondary graduates to the field of municipal administration and the field of planning administration. The program provides funding and training resources to selected Alberta municipalities to hire and train interns.

## Emerging Initiatives

- Develop a *Healthy Alberta: A Wellness Framework 2010 - 2020* that outlines the government's long-term vision, goals, targets and commitment to the health of Albertans to the year 2020 (focus on healthy living and disease and injury prevention).
- Develop an *Aboriginal Wellness Strategy* that outlines activities and initiatives to improve the health status and well-being of Aboriginal people.
- Work with First Nations government and organizations, major provincial resource industry associations, municipal government organization and other stakeholders to review Alberta's First Nations Consultation Policy.
- Develop the *Healthy Kids Action Plan* to ensure GOA policies and programs related to the wellness of children and youth are coordinated, and opportunities for synergies and greater collaboration are identified.
- Develop and implement initiatives that support nonprofit organizations in their efforts to create a greater sense of belonging in the community, particularly those with a focus on youth, Aboriginal and emerging ethno-cultural issues.
- Identify and implement actions to enhance enforcement of workplace and labour legislation and policies, and advance the awareness of occupational health and safety and employment standards through educational initiatives.
- Develop and implement the *Progressive Reclamation Strategy* (policy review is underway). Emerging initiatives for rural Alberta include the reclamation certification program and the remediation certification program
- Develop and implement the *Alberta Wetlands Policy* to support the goals of Alberta's Land-use Framework. Providing clear and consistent provincial direction to land and resource managers, developers, land owners, land users, and stewards on wetlands conservation and management, enables the GOA to ensure that place-based environmental, social, and economic values are reflected in wetland management, and encourage all Albertans to conserve and protect wetlands through active stewardship.

- Work with federal, provincial, territorial governments through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to develop a new national air quality management system and action plan to protect human and environmental health.
- The Northern Alberta Development Council will research the emergency services provided by rural and small urban centres based on volunteer services, and determine where they are at risk of being inadequate to meet needs and demands from growth and more complex industry.
- Determine the impact of increased numbers of seniors on services and transportation alternatives to service as demographics show that Alberta's senior population is increasing with corresponding needs for access to services.
- Prepare a *Long-term Real Estate Strategy* to guide the redevelopment of 7 Government of Alberta-owned and supported social housing in over 900 locations and 18,000 units outside Edmonton and Calgary.
- Adopt standard facility designs and best practices to increase the efficiency of health care facilities infrastructure design, construction and operation, including Net Areas and Grossing Factors, Standard Design, Building Performance Evaluation
- Develop a support network of Private Guardians throughout the Province to assist decision makers in accessing services and to provide community-based support in rural communities to decision-makers.
- Implement the *Alberta Aggregate (sand and gravel) Allocation Policy for Commercial Use on Public Land*, a new policy that recognizes requirements for public works as the main consideration in allocation of aggregate. Refer all aggregate exploration applications to related municipalities for comments.
- Under the Municipal Corporate Review Program work with municipal council and administration to identify strengths, and generate solutions where improvements to municipal operations can be made in report form to council.
- Increase the use of peer assessment in funding programs to foster artistic excellence, promote organizational health and ensure transparency.
- Develop a strategic plan and policy objectives to address the future direction of creative industries in Alberta.
- Develop and implement an Alberta-wide action plan for building inclusive communities.
- Increase opportunities for engagement with clients and stakeholders to improve access to services and resources.
- Promote Aboriginal heritage by collaborating with communities on heritage preservation and renewing exhibits at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump.
- Engage Albertans in learning about their energy resource heritage by creating a website about Alberta's energy resource history, updating exhibits at the Oil Sands Discovery Centre and making progress on conserving and interpreting the Turner Valley Gas Plant.
- Increase the sustainability of the heritage sector in rural Alberta through the development of capacity-building tools for communities and collaboration with museum, archives and historical societies.
- Implement changes to Alberta Human Rights Commission complaint processes in order to achieve more timely resolutions.
- Investigate and implement changes to Alberta Human Rights Commission Tribunal processes for resolving and adjudicating complaints to ensure they are fair, respectful, accessible and transparent.

## Access to Health Care

### Current Initiatives

- The health care needs of rural Albertans continue to be met through
  - Delivery of numerous acute care health infrastructure projects (new and/or expansions) in rural Alberta - Lethbridge Regional Hospital, Medicine Hat Regional Hospital, Bow Island Health Centre, Edson Regional Hospital, High Prairie Health Complex, Grand Prairie Regional Health Centre, Red Deer Cancer Centre, Lloydminster Care Centre.
  - New supportive living facilities in the communities of Didsbury, Fort McMurray, High River, Lacombe, Red Deer, Spruce Grove, Stettler, Westlock.
  - Enhanced radiation therapy capacity through the creation of a north-south corridor that includes three new sites for radiation therapy in Lethbridge, Red Deer and Grande Prairie.
  - Integration of EMS stations with health facilities rather than community facilities. Expansion of access to ambulatory and other community care services will improve access to close-to-home care for Albertans.
- The Business Cost Program, effective September 1, 2007, addresses the rising costs of medical practice in Alberta. A \$3.25 payment (Calgary, Airdrie and DeWinton) or \$2.75 (all other Alberta communities) is paid to physicians for each of 74 eligible health service codes submitted from an office or diagnostic facility.
- The *Rural Remote Northern Program* was established September 1, 2007 to recruit and retain physicians in under-serviced areas of Alberta. There are 559 eligible communities. Physicians can receive the Variable Fee Premium (a percentage applied to all insured services submitted) and/or the Flat Fee (paid as a lump-sum yearly payment for physicians residing in eligible communities). The annual compensation limit is \$60,000.
- The Primary Care Initiative Committee (PCIC), the provincial body mandated to oversee *Primary Care Networks* (PCNs), is developing policy recommendations to address the challenges of small/rural/remote PCNs (e.g., funding and capacity building) for approval on or before March 31 2011. PCNs provide a full range of primary care services to the Alberta communities they serve.
- Under the *Physician On Call Programs* (POCP), general practitioners in rural Alberta can be remunerated for the availability and burden of being on call. Although not intended as a recruitment tool, on call funding does provide additional incentive to hiring physicians in rural communities.
- Established in 1991, *the Alberta Rural Physician Action Plan* (RPAP) is an independent not-for-profit company funded by Alberta Health & Wellness (AHW) at a cost of approximately \$10 million annually. The RPAP provides a provincially-focused comprehensive, integrated and sustained program for the education, recruitment and retention of physicians for rural practice.
- \$5 million has been made available to rural pharmacies through the *Pharmacy Rural Access program* to supplement their revenues, and to maintain access to pharmacists in these communities. Revision and extension of the program is under consideration for 2011 and beyond.
- Phase One of the *Government of Alberta's Health Capital Plan* includes construction of 22 leading-edge health care facilities in 15 rural communities worth over \$1.4 billion in provincial support. The communities of Cochrane, Edson, Fort McMurray, Fort Saskatchewan, Grande Prairie, High Prairie, Lethbridge, Lloydminster, Medicine Hat, Peace River, Red Deer, Sherwood Park, St. Albert, Stony Plain, and Strathmore will have highly functional, accessible facilities that support the delivery of top-quality health care services in the province.
- The *Dental Outreach Program* (DOP) ensures the availability of dental services to remote and under-served Alberta communities. Administered and operated by the Department of Dentistry, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, University of Alberta, satellite clinics located in High Level, McLennan and La Crete provide services to over 3600 patients.
- Under the *Mobile Diabetes Screening Initiative* (MDSII), a team of specialized health professionals visits remote, off-reserve Aboriginal and northern communities in a van with portable testing equipment to screen for diabetes and its complications. The team also does health promotion/diabetes education, and where possible, encourages linkages with local health care providers. To date, 25 unique communities have been visited to date, many of them a number of times.

- *Alberta's Caring for Diabetes (ABCD) Initiative* project (2005-2013), aims to improve the quality and efficiency of care for patients with diabetes, with an emphasis on non-metro areas of Alberta. ABCD works with Alberta Health Services and 4 primary care networks (St Albert Sturgeon, Camrose, Alberta Heartland and Leduc Beaumont Devon) to implement interventions with diabetes patients in areas such as active living, healthy eating, screening and managing depression.
- *Electronic Medical Record (EMR)* software contributes to the effective operation of rural community physician offices and ability to share care delivery information with the rest of the health system. EMR systems are targeted to be fully deployed in community physician offices in urban and rural Alberta by March 31, 2014.
- The provincial *Electronic Health Record (EHR) – Alberta Netcare* gives authorized health care providers access to patient-centric health information, created and collected across the province, including lab and diagnostic imaging results, transcribed reports, health system encounters, and medication information. Rural Albertans who often receive health services in multiple facilities or geographical locations will receive better care as a result of the provincial EHR, because their health information follows them. The EHR will make information created at the clinic level (from EMRs) available provincially through the Shared Health Record Initiative (See Emerging Initiatives entry below).

## Emerging Initiatives

- *Shared Health Record (SHR) Initiative* – over the period 2010 to 2015, develop and deploy the capability to collect and share clinical information between the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) and the Electronic Health Record (EHR) in a series of releases.
  - Release 1 (2011/2012) will include the sharing of primary care encounters from EMRs to the EHR and the ability to query both primary care and acute care encounters from the EHR to the EMR, and provide ability for Physicians to find and retrieve clinical text reports from Netcare through their EMR.
  - Once the EMR to EHR connection is established, rural Albertans will see additional benefits when they received treatments outside of their community (for example in urban centres).
- The *Continuing Care Health Technology Initiative* will field test and evaluate the use of appropriate health technologies in home care settings to provide an array of proven and innovative health technologies to assist seniors and those with disabilities to age in their homes and communities.
  - Field tests, to occur in the communities of Grande Prairie and Medicine Hat, will address labour force constraints, distance delivery issues, and to improve the efficiency and the quality of continuing care services.
- The *Continuing Care Community Initiatives Demonstration Project* 'Neighbours Helping Neighbours' will demonstrate, test and evaluate community engagement models that will inform the development of a provincial approach and toolkit for engaging neighbours and community volunteers to support seniors with meals, transportation, companionship, monitoring, and social activities.
  - The Jasper Community Team and the City of Edmonton have been initially selected to develop, pilot and evaluate models of community engagement.
- The *Helping Operationalize Palliative/End-of-Life Care Initiative* will enhance expertise and access to quality palliative care for people living with a life-threatening illness across Alberta. The initiative will provide enhanced access, outreach services to palliative care experts, appropriate training and education to continuing care staff working in rural areas of the province, enabling more Albertans at the end of their lives to remain in their homes and communities.
- Improve capacity and timely access to addictions and mental health services for those living in rural and or isolated areas so that all Albertans have appropriate and equitable access to the full range of services.

## Learning and Skill Development

### Current Initiatives

- Continued implementation of the directions in the *Roles and Mandates Framework* for the publicly funded advanced education system to strengthen the community adult learning system and its linkages to comprehensive community institutions.
- Through the *Learning Clicks Program*, ambassadors visit rural junior and senior high schools and communities across the province to motivate both youth and adults to pursue further education and training and to assist potential learners in how to navigate the Campus Alberta system. The program has developed unique strategies in partnership with community leaders to engage Aboriginal students on and off reserve.
- Awareness initiatives provide Albertans with information about planning for education and training after high school using a wide array of tools and resources. These include on-line resources available through the Alberta Learning Information Services (ALIS) website and numerous high quality publications available free of charge through the Learning Resources Centre.
- The *Pre-clinical Networked Medical Education pilot (2010/2011)* is providing second-year medical students with 3-4 week placements in rural settings (Lethbridge, Olds, Grande Prairie, Peace River, and Hinton). The primary objective is to inform the career choices of medical students by exposing them to the challenges and rewards of generalist and rural practice.
- Employers throughout Alberta hire and train apprentices and apprenticeship technical training is offered in various locations across the province. In addition, ongoing support for trades-related and other post-secondary education throughout rural Alberta is provided. Apprentices and employers can access up-to-date information through the Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AIT) website at [www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca](http://www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca).
- The Northern Alberta Development Council provides up to \$475,000 annually in bursaries to students who are studying in areas of high demand in northern Alberta. Recipients must live and work in northern Alberta for one year for each year of funding they receive
- Funding is provided to support necessary small schools, many of which are rural, based on the enrolment levels of schools, the distance between schools and the capacity of schools.
- Numerous supports for teachers to northern Alberta are available. They include the *Supporting Beginning Teachers Program (Teacher Induction Program)* to help beginning teachers transition, increasing the number of qualified and committed teachers in northern and rural Alberta communities through the *Northern Student Teacher Bursary*, addressing teacher recruitment and retention issues through the *Northlands Aboriginal Teacher Education Program*, providing enhanced funding supports to practicum teachers in northern communities through the *Rural Practicum Enhancement Initiative*, and enabling FNMI paraprofessionals in northern schools to access teacher preparation programs without leaving their communities through the *Community Based (FNMI) Teacher Education Program*.
- In February 2010, a *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for First Nations Education in Alberta* was signed. It provides a common vision for First Nations education in Alberta where First Nations students (on reserve and off reserve) are achieving or exceeding the full educational outcomes, levels and successes of all other students in Alberta.
- A First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Collaborative Framework was developed to facilitate and strengthen partnerships between school authorities and their adjoining FNMI communities, parents, and stakeholders to enhance FNMI student achievement and bolster overall student success. Six collaborative framework sessions were delivered across the province in January 2011.
- As part of a broader government of an Alberta initiative to engage FNMI parent and communities in education and development of their children, fourteen "Families, Parents and Communities Engagement" workshops, most in rural areas, were offered in November 2010.

- In 2008, \$9.3 million was allocated over three years to enhance supports for students with vision loss in Alberta. Activities that benefit rural Alberta include support to Vision Resource Centres which provide access to professional development opportunities, support for vision services in northern Alberta school jurisdictions through video-conferencing, Students with Vision Loss Initiative projects to develop resources and programs that help rural students with vision loss to achieve educational outcomes and support for eight travelling low-vision clinics for children and students.
- The *Alberta High School Completion Framework* allows for a number of innovative projects and initiatives, many of which currently impact rural Alberta. Success for Children and Youth in Care pilot sites include the rural areas of Athabasca, Lac La Biche / Kikino, and Wetaskiwin. FNMI and 21st Century Competencies is a research project involving Fort Vermilion School Division schools uses differentiated teaching, extensive use of technology for inquiry-based learning to enhance student learning and achievement for FNMI students. The Tell Them From Me Student Survey, a web based survey tool, provides data on student engagement to meet the ongoing planning needs of teachers, school administrators and jurisdiction leaders.
- Victims Services volunteer advocates can take online training at 17 pilot sites and includes rural and remote locations. A full-version of the on-line training, which makes the training accessible across the province, will be launch in January 2011.
- Unemployed forestry workers can be retrained or find alternate work through projects funded by Community Development Trust Funds grants.
- The Office of the Public Guardian is developing a province-wide community of professionals trained to conduct capacity assessments for people who may require guardianship services by offering a 3-day capacity assessor training program under the Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act (AGTA). Training professionals who are working in rural and underserved communities such as northern and eastern Alberta has been a priority.
- Recent post-secondary graduates continue to be encouraged to explore careers in municipal administration and planning administration through an internship program. The program provides funding and training resources to selected Alberta municipalities to hire and train interns.
- The technologies required in schools to support realization of Inspiring Education and Inspiring Action on Education are being determined, including bandwidth, technology devices and tools to support synchronous and asynchronous collaboration.

## Emerging Initiatives

- Further collaborative initiatives within Campus Alberta will occur through the development of Campus Alberta Administration (CAA), an umbrella organization that will exist outside the ministry. CAA will facilitate the growth of Campus Alberta's collaborative environment, to pursue operational efficiencies and establish greater synergies. eCampus Alberta, Apply Alberta, and Alberta-North are collaborative entities that offer Albertans on-line application and learning opportunities, thereby giving rural Albertans greater access to post-secondary learning opportunities.
  - Exploring technology solutions that enhance student mobility and the quality of learner support systems/services across Campus Alberta.
- A *School Technology Services Framework* is being developed to build capacity in Information Technology (IT) Governance, IT Service Management and Information Security Management in all Alberta school authorities. Training will be provided at no cost to all Alberta school authorities.
- The *Alberta High School Completion Framework* includes a number of innovative projects and initiatives, many of which will impact rural Alberta.
  - Exploring Transitions and Dual Credit Options in Alberta provides opportunities for students to be registered and receive credit in both a high school and a post-secondary institution. Current pilots exist with Red Deer College, Olds College and Lakeland College.
  - Advancing Adolescent Reading Initiative will produce a series of training modules for junior and senior high teachers to be trained in adolescent reading intervention. Rural teachers and school jurisdictions can easily access training through online course delivery.

- Any Curriculum Redesign will include developing more digitally-based curriculum, with a greater focus on competencies that students require for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- Identifying priorities for school infrastructure to the Government of Alberta Capital Planning Initiative includes developing an understanding of school jurisdiction needs (both rural and urban) and building a business case for providing funding to support those needs (e.g. modernizations, additions or new schools).
- e-Learning will be expanded to include online victim services training for Victim Services Unit (VSU) Coordinators, and for criminal justice stakeholders (police, courts, corrections) across the province.

## Other

### Current Initiatives

- Strategic input will be provided to the Rural Alberta Development Fund as they commit the remainder of the \$100M Fund for rural development projects and consider future directions.
- The First Nations Development Fund (FNDF) supports a range of community, social, and economic development projects with First Nations. The funding comes from a portion of revenues from government-owned slot machines located in First Nation casinos in Alberta. Applications are submitted to FNDF based on each First Nation's priorities.
- With Safe Communities funding, five enhanced policing officers will work with the eight Métis Settlements on local priorities such as traffic issues, school resource officers, drugs and gangs, etc. These officers complement existing detachment policing in Settlement communities.
- School bus safety is part of the government's overall commitment to traffic safety. A number of school bus initiatives implemented over the past year, strengthened rural student transportation in terms of safe student transportation and enhanced school bus operation by rural Albertans who supplement the farm income by driving school bus.
- A project that allows temporary foreign workers to operate vehicles using a valid driver's license from their home country with an international drivers license to operate vehicles, enables farmers to better utilize their temporary seasonal foreign work force.