

**Northern Alberta
Development Council**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2003-2004**

2003-2004 Annual Report

Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Northern Alberta Development Council, I am very pleased to present our Annual Report for 2003-2004. This past year has been an exciting one for Alberta's North and I'd like to highlight some of the Council's key achievements that contribute to the development of the North.

The Council focuses its efforts on the realization of opportunities to advance northern development, while addressing barriers that may affect development. Some of the key initiatives during the 2003-2004 year are highlighted below:

- The Council presented the *Challenge North 2003 Conference* in Fort McMurray on April 9-11, 2003. The Conference provided business and community leaders with a forum to discuss challenges and opportunities critical to the North;
- "Opportunity North", a recruitment campaign designed to assist northern employers recruit staff to Northern Alberta, continues to be well-accessed and is in the process of being updated to ensure the content remains current;
- Transportation issues remained a high priority this year. Road, rail and air access is critical to the development of the region. These issues will continue to receive prominence into the coming year;
- Ongoing involvement in inter-jurisdictional initiatives such as the Northwest Corridor Development Corporation, Alberta's Memorandum of Understanding with the Northwest territories and the Northern Development Ministers' Forum has resulted in strong, positive partnerships working to advance development of the North; and
- The Council is always looking for new ways to increase skill levels in the North. A new medical bursary was introduced in 2003-2004 which saw \$10,000 bursaries awarded to two students. The bursaries were co-sponsored by the Northern Alberta Development Council and the Peace Country Health Authority.

The Council remains committed to advancing northern development through our work with northern stakeholders, municipalities, communities, industry and neighboring jurisdictions. Together, we will work toward a strong, progressive, prosperous North.


Gary Friedel



NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AREA



Produced by Resource Data Division, Alberta Environment/Protection
Base map provided by Spatial Data Warehouse
February 1999

**Northern Alberta
Development Council**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2003-2004**

**NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT 2003-2004**

Table of Contents

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Operational Overview 1

- Mission..... 1
- Core Business 1
- The NADC Region 2

BUSINESS PLAN GOAL, STRATEGIES AND MEASURES

Goal 2

- Key Strategies 2
- Performance Measures 2

RESULTS ANALYSIS

Profiling the North..... 2

- Northern Development Strategy 3

Dialogue with Northerners 3

- Leaders’ Round Tables 3
- Meetings with Key Northern Stakeholders 3
- Challenge North 2003 Conference 4
- Communication Strategies 4

Partnering for Development..... 4

- Inter-jurisdictional Initiatives 4
- Working With Northern Groups 6
- Northern Initiatives..... 7

Developing Northern Skill Levels 11

- NADC Bursary 12
- NADC Bursary for Medical Students 13
- Bursary Partnership Program 13
- Northern Student Supplement 13
- Practicum Placement Funding..... 13
- Awards, Bursaries and Scholarship Booklet 14
- Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse 14
- Northern LINKS 14
- Woodland Operations Learning Foundation (WOLF)..... 15
- Youth Apprenticeship Program..... 15

Performance Measures 15

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

..... 17

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2003-2004

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Operational Overview

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) is a council of and for northerners. As a reporting entity of the Ministry of Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, the Council identifies and implements measures to advance the development of northern Alberta and advises government on opportunities and issues. The NADC works in partnership with the private sector, northern municipalities and communities, economic development agencies, educational institutions, Aboriginal groups, jurisdictions outside northern Alberta and government ministries to achieve its goals.

The NADC consists of nine public members and one elected Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta (MLA). Council membership reflects the geographic, cultural and vocational diversity of northern communities. In 2003-2004, the Council was chaired by Gary Friedel, the MLA for Peace River. The public members were:

- Sandra Cardinal, Kikino
- Berkley Ferguson, Boyle
- Wendell MacEachern, Fort McMurray
- Mike Mihaly, High Level
- Maurice Rivard, Bonnyville
- Doris Courtoreille, Kinuso
- Ron Faulkner, McLennan
- Pete Merlo, Grande Prairie
- Gary Pollock, Swan Hills

Mission

The mission of the NADC is to advance northern development through regional initiatives in partnership with the private sector, community-based organizations and other government agencies.

Core Business

The mandate of the NADC, as set out in the Northern Alberta Development Council Act, is to “investigate, monitor, evaluate, plan and promote practical measures to foster and advance general development in northern Alberta.” The NADC supports the government’s commitment to prosperity by facilitating the development of a thriving and progressive northern economy.

The mission of the NADC is to advance northern development through regional initiatives in partnership with the private sector, community-based organizations and other government agencies.

The NADC Region

Northern Alberta represents 60% of Alberta's landmass, 9% of the Province's total population and 51% of its Aboriginal population. It has a diverse resource base and is a key contributor to the provincial economy. Oil sands, conventional oil, natural gas, agriculture, forestry and tourism provide limitless opportunities for development and prosperity in northern Alberta.

Key challenges for the region include: geographical factors such as distances to market and transportation costs; a low population base; limited infrastructure; and a shortage of skilled workers. Priorities include: raising skill levels so northerners can take advantage of employment opportunities; adding value to and diversifying northern products; improving access to markets through better transportation networks; continued exploration of additional resource development opportunities; and raising awareness of what makes the North unique.

BUSINESS PLAN GOAL, STRATEGIES AND MEASURES

Goal: *To advance development of northern Alberta.*

Key Strategies

- Coordinate government and non-government strategies through a northern development strategy to increase awareness and advance the importance of northern development to the well being of the entire Province of Alberta.
- Engage northern communities, businesses and other stakeholders through information-gathering processes to identify northern priorities, opportunities and challenges (e.g., *Challenge North 2003 Conference*).
- Partner with jurisdictions outside northern Alberta, ministries, businesses and communities to promote opportunities and address northern challenges.
- Support learning initiatives aimed at increasing northern skill levels.

Performance Measures

- Northern leaders, project partners and clients report their satisfaction with NADC's contribution in advancing northern interests. The target is an average rating of 8 out of 10.
- Achieve a NADC Bursary recipients' return service rate of 75%.

RESULTS ANALYSIS

Profiling the North

The NADC works with other ministries and stakeholders to advance the development of economic opportunities and to ensure that the interests of northern Albertans are acknowledged and considered in the development of provincial strategies. The NADC completed a report on *Economic Contributions of*

the NADC Region to Alberta and Canada which outlined direct economic contributions from the region. Although there is considerable investment in portions of the region, challenges remain in addressing the impact of this investment on social and other infrastructure, the disparity of benefits between regions, the need for sustainable and value-added development, and the need to maximize northern benefits from development.

Northern Development Strategy

Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development has been working on a draft northern development strategy with input from the NADC. The process has included discussions with stakeholders that have an interest in the future of northern Alberta. The proposed northern development strategy will coordinate strategic planning processes that address the sustainable development of northern Alberta. Under the proposed strategy, such topics as economic and resource diversification, transportation and infrastructure, and skill development will be addressed. The strategy will also support broad policy integration to ensure northern interests are considered in government policy, programs and services.

Dialogue with Northerners

Leaders' Roundtables

As part of the NADC's regular meetings held throughout the North, the Council organizes meetings that include leaders from the area in which the meetings are being held. These meetings provide regional leaders with the chance to discuss the opportunities and challenges related to northern development with the Council's members and staff. The meetings held during the past year provided an excellent forum for the review and discussion of key issues related to the advancement of northern development. During the past year, Leaders' Roundtable meetings were held in Manning, Fox Creek, Bonnyville and Athabasca/Boyle. Numerous presentations were made to the Council; these presentations provided the NADC with a basis on which to take action.

Meetings with Key Northern Stakeholders

Throughout the year, the NADC's members and staff meet with key northern stakeholders outside the regular Council meetings and Leaders' Roundtable meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to communicate with private and public organizations that have an interest in northern development in order to obtain their insight into northern issues. In 2003-2004, members and staff met with representatives from the Bonnyville, Grande Cache, Grande Prairie, High Level, Lac La Biche, Peace River and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo areas.

Oil sands, conventional oil, natural gas, agriculture, forestry and tourism provide limitless opportunities for development and prosperity in northern Alberta.

Challenge North 2003 Conference

The NADC hosted the *Challenge North 2003 Conference* in Fort McMurray on April 9, 10 and 11, 2003. The Conference provided business and community leaders from across the region with a forum to discuss challenges and opportunities they believed were critical to the future growth of northern Alberta. Through presentations and workshops, the Conference enlightened delegates about the economic, social, environmental and global trends that may have significant impact on northern development.

The NADC will use the proceedings from the *Challenge North 2003 Conference* as a checklist for the implementation of identified actions that can be taken to advance the North and its economic development. Planning is already underway for the *Challenge North 2006 Conference*.

Communication Strategies

Working and communicating with northern Albertans is very important to the NADC. It provides a source of ideas, opinions and information that can be used to advance Alberta's northern regions.

The Council publishes a quarterly newsletter known as *Northern Developments* and distributes it across northern Alberta. The newsletter is sent to northern businesses, industries, municipal governments, Aboriginal organizations, community groups and to government departments. The newsletter provides information related to the projects and programs being undertaken by the Council.

The Council's members and staff met with the northern Alberta Members of the Legislative Assembly in November 2003 to discuss northern development opportunities, challenges and issues. Coupled with this meeting, were numerous meetings with the MLA's on a variety of northern development topics. The Council also provided the MLA's with information about the Council's activities through bi-monthly publications of the *Northern Alberta MLA's Update*.

Over the past year, the Council updated and continued to improve its website. The website contains information related to northern student bursary programs, publications and northern-based statistics, as well as the Council's newsletters, news releases and reports.

Partnering for Development

Inter-jurisdictional Initiatives

In addition to and as part of its work with organizations based in northern Alberta, the NADC continued to work with northern jurisdictions outside Alberta. Through its involvement in these initiatives, the Council was able to discuss opportunities to advance northern development and to address northern development challenges with northern regions from across Canada and from around the northern world. This type of contact provides the Council with an opportunity to expand its knowledge base and to learn more about northern issues.

The Northern Forum

The Northern Forum is an international consortium consisting of northern regional governments. Its mandate is to promote cooperation and exchange information on northern socio-economic issues and initiatives. The NADC provided support to the Minister of Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development in her role as the North American Vice President for the Northern Forum.

Alberta-Northwest Territories Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation and Development

In October 2003, the Premiers of Alberta and the Northwest Territories signed a five-year extension to the *Alberta-Northwest Territories Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation and Development*. The Memorandum of Understanding will continue to provide a framework for cooperation between the two jurisdictions.

The Minister of Health for the Northwest Territories and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development for Alberta are co-chairs of the Memorandum of Understanding.

The co-chairs approved initiatives related to tourism, transportation, skill development and resource development. They also took an initial look at possible areas of cooperation in the areas of innovation and research. The Council acts as Alberta's Secretariat for the Memorandum of Understanding.

Northwest Corridor Development Corporation

The past year was an exciting one for the Northwest Corridor Development Corporation. Progress was made in relation to the re-opening of the rail line between Hythe, Alberta and Dawson Creek, British Columbia, and to the containerization of the Port of Prince Rupert. Progress was also made in relation to the development of the highway connection between Rainbow Lake, Alberta and Fort Nelson, British Columbia.

The Corporation, in conjunction with the NADC and with municipalities in northwestern Alberta and in northeastern British Columbia, undertook a study that looked at the agricultural land development potential of the area between Fort Vermilion, Alberta and Fort Nelson, British Columbia. The study was adopted by the Corporation and forwarded to the respective Provincial Governments for their review.

The Council continues to be the Government of Alberta's representative on the Corporation. Over the past year, the NADC assisted the Corporation with the planning of its annual conference, attendance at meetings, communications and research work into matters related to The Northwest Corridor.

Northern Development Ministers' Forum

The NADC is the Secretariat for Alberta's participation as a member of the Northern Development Ministers' Forum. The Forum includes membership from seven provinces, three territories and the Federal Government. Each year, the Ministers hold a Northern Development Ministers Conference. Nunavut chaired the 2003 Conference. The Minister of Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern

The NADC will use the proceedings from the *Challenge North 2003 Conference* as a checklist for the implementation of identified actions that can be taken to advance the North and its economic development.

Development and the Chair of the NADC participated in the Conference.

Alberta continued to be the lead jurisdiction for the Ministers' priority project known as the *Northern Awareness Enhancement Campaign*. The Council coordinated the first part of the Campaign through the preparation of the *Focus North* information folder. Other priority projects adopted by the Ministers include: recruitment and retention of skilled labour in the North; northern transportation investment; and the socio-economic benefits associated with northern development.

Saskatchewan Northern Affairs

There have been preliminary discussions, through the NADC, between Saskatchewan Northern Affairs and Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development on possible areas of cooperation. A cooperative framework between the two jurisdictions would focus on the advancement of socio-economic development of the respective northern regions.

The NADC organized a meeting between the Minister of Saskatchewan Northern Affairs and the Alberta Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development in the Fort McMurray area to discuss areas of potential cooperation. The discussion centred around skill development, tourism and transportation.

On a regular basis, Saskatchewan Northern Affairs and the NADC exchange information on northern development topics of mutual interest.

Working With Northern Groups

The NADC also participated in several regional working groups, providing input, feedback and support.

Northern Alberta Municipalities

The NADC acted as the Secretariat for the Northwest Alberta Mayors and Reeves Group. This group will expand to include all rural and urban municipalities located in northern Alberta. The Council assisted with the organization of meetings, coordination of follow-up actions and research into areas of interest expressed by the mayors and reeves.

Regional Economic Alliances

There are a number of regional economic development alliances in northern Alberta. The NADC works with these groups on various northern development projects. Examples of this work include the Council's communication with the Regional Economic Development Initiative (Northwest Alberta) on matters related to development in the Northwest Territories, and its on-going involvement in GROWTH (Grizzly Regional Economic Development Alliance).

GROWTH is made up of eleven partners including the Town of Swan Hills, Woodland County and the Pembina Hills School Board, which are part of the NADC area. In 2003-2004, the GROWTH website was developed; the Regional Business Directory was updated; the Business Visitation Program model was developed and tested using the Manufacturing Sector; Business Recognition Program model was developed; and a Targeted Investment Generation report was prepared which identified opportunities related to agricultural diversification, recreational tourism and senior care.

Northeast and Northwest Interdepartmental Groups

The NADC coordinated meetings involving various provincial departments, organizations and associations located in Alberta's northwestern and central northeastern regions. Participants discussed how to collaborate on areas of common interest and how to coordinate approaches on such issues as economic and social development, recruitment and retention, training initiatives, affordable housing, and on discussions with Aboriginal communities.

Regional Issues Working Group (RIWG) – Transportation Committee

The NADC continued to meet, on a monthly basis, with the RIWG Transportation Committee to assist the oil sands developers with infrastructure and transportation concerns.

Regional Roads Committee – Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

The Council participated in meetings with the Regional Roads Committee for the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo in regard to a northeast road network to serve the Regional Municipality.

Lac La Biche/Lakeland County Interpretive Centre

The NADC assisted the Lac La Biche/Lakeland Interpretive Society with its interpretive centre project proposed for the Town of Lac La Biche.

Canadian Circumpolar Institute

The Canadian Circumpolar Institute undertakes research work on northern regions across the world and is based at the University of Alberta. The NADC is a member of the Advisory Committee for the Institute and provides input into some of its initiatives.

Northern Initiatives

The NADC actively seeks partnerships with northern organizations to promote economic diversification and develop solutions appropriate for northern conditions. Following are highlights of initiatives undertaken to address northern priorities.

Housing

The NADC initiated research for a Northern Alberta Housing Study in order to provide a summary of issues related to housing in the North. Demographic data has been collected, a survey has been developed and carried out, and the information is being summarized into a report.

Forestry

The NADC continues to participate in an inter-departmental initiative monitoring the impact of tariffs on softwood lumber exports to the United States. The NADC also provides non-financial support to four Forest Education Societies based in northern Alberta.

Alberta continued to be the lead jurisdiction for the Ministers' priority project known as the *Northern Awareness Enhancement Campaign*.

.....

There are a number of regional economic development alliances in northern Alberta. The NADC works with these groups on various northern development projects.

Value-Added Agriculture

The NADC continues to work with its many partners in the Peace Agriculture Value-Added Strategy working group on a long-term developmental initiative. This project focuses on an awareness and promotion strategy related to the value-added agriculture initiative in the Alberta and British Columbia Peace Region.

This project will raise awareness of the Peace Region's comparative advantages, and the benefits and opportunities of adding value to agricultural production among regional entrepreneurs, investors and communities. The goals of this strategy are to develop a stronger agriculture industry in the region, to provide direction to commodity-based organizations and to entrepreneurs in order to develop value-added opportunities, and to improve the sustainability of rural communities. It is a crucial first step in the long-term process of building a mature, self-sustaining value-added agriculture industry.

Work continued with the Alberta Beef Team to attract beef producers to the NADC region and with the Alberta New Crops Network/Alberta Natural Health Agriculture Network on promotion of alternative crops for specialty markets.

Recycling

Northern Coordinated Action For Recycling Enterprises (Northern CARE) continues to advance northern recycling in partnership with northern stakeholders such as municipal governments, industries, community organizations and the NADC. The Council assisted Northern CARE by assisting with the monitoring and evaluation of its business plan; providing input into discussion papers related to provincial recycling strategies; and planning its annual northern recycling conference.

Tourism

The NADC continues to provide support to the northern tourism industry through board participation with the Alberta North Tourism Destination Region. The NADC serves in an advisory role with Alberta North and uses that organization's close relationships with northern tourism operators and organizations to guide the Council's role in northern tourism industry development. The NADC continues to support and work to improve northern and rural tourism development initiatives. The NADC partnered with Travel Alberta North to host the third *Northern Exposure Tourism Conference*. The Conference was held in Grande Prairie from February 25 to 27, 2004. The Council also participated in other provincial planning processes to ensure coordination of strategy development and consideration of northern tourism issues.

The NADC's follow-up work is focused in the priority areas of product development, industry training and encouraging coordinated support for service delivery to the northern tourism industry. In 2003-2004, the NADC served as an executive board member, increased its participation with the marketing committee and served on Travel Alberta's ALTO Award Committee, recognizing provincial tourism excellence. A focus for the future will be to increase the Aboriginal component of Alberta tourism initiatives.

The NADC has been involved on the steering committee of a group working to establish a tourism research centre in northern Alberta for three years. The Northern Alberta Tourism Research Centre will be an organization that addresses the tourism research and data needs of regional businesses, agencies and communities. The governing group will be made up of public and private sector stakeholders and will act as a broker of, and clearinghouse for, tourism research and data. The ultimate purpose of the organization

is to foster tourism development in the region.

The NADC chairs and provides organizational, administrative and technical support to the Deh Cho Travel Connection group, an inter-jurisdictional tourism marketing society, involving the Northwest Territories, northeastern British Columbia and northwestern Alberta. The group's work focuses on the promotion of the circle tour route.

As Chair of the Deh Cho Travel Connection, the NADC is responsible for the communication and administrative functions of the group and has made strides in terms of the level of participation in the group and its overall effectiveness. The NADC is also an active participant on the group's marketing and administrative committees. The full group met twice over the past year: once in British Columbia and once in the Northwest Territories. The group developed their annual business/marketing plan, distributed the circle tour brochure, planned the development of the website, attended four consumer shows to promote this inter-jurisdictional initiative and made several presentations to tourism stakeholders.

The NADC reported on tourism developments to the co-chairs of the *Alberta-Northwest Territories Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation and Development*.

The NADC staff worked on projects related to increasing "fly-drive" traffic, Aboriginal tourism and improving tourism highway signage.

Resource Development

The NADC monitored the resource development occurring in northern Alberta, particularly resource development and activities related to oil sands, oil-gas, forestry and mining.

The Council exchanged information on resource development activity in northern Alberta with the Government of the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan Northern Affairs and with the Northwest Corridor Development Corporation. Information from these other northern regions provides insight into potential economic spin-offs for northern Alberta.

Recruitment and Retention of Northern Labour

The *Opportunity North* initiative continues to be coordinated by the NADC. The CD-ROM and website have been used by numerous northern-based employers as a way to recruit and retain skilled employees. Materials related to *Opportunity North* have been widely circulated to private and public organizations across northern Alberta.

The Council has initiated the planning and organization of the next *Northern Alberta Human Resources Conference* scheduled for 2005 in Grande Prairie. Past conferences have provided an excellent venue for the exchange of information on best practices in the areas of employee retention and recruitment.

The NADC continues to support initiatives that will further northern tourism.

.....
***Opportunity North* has been used by numerous northern-based employers as a way to recruit and retain skilled workers.**

As part of its commitment to the Northern Development Ministers Forum, and in its role as Alberta's Secretariat to the Forum, the Council provided input into the updates associated with the "Recruitment and Retention Best Practices in Canada's North" priority project. The Northern Development Ministers selected this topic as a priority project due to the fact that many of the related issues apply to all of Canada's northern regions.

The Council continues to provide leadership and organizational support to the Northern Distance Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Planning Circle and the Northern BSW Council of Stakeholders.

Transportation

Along with numerous northern stakeholders, the NADC has played a key role in the debate related to the future of the Edmonton City Centre Airport. NADC Chair, Gary Friedel, chaired a group of stakeholders that have an interest in the City Centre Airport and was a member of the Edmonton Regional Airports Authority's Consultation Group that prepared recommendations on the future operation of this facility. The Council continues to be actively involved in this debate due to the importance of the City Centre Airport to northern Alberta's air transportation system.

The NADC worked with Northwest Territories Transportation on an initiative looking at enhancing the air transportation connections between Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Through the *Alberta-Northwest Territories Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation and Development*, the respective jurisdictions continue to look at opportunities for such air transportation links.

Good quality roads and rail lines are critical factors in developing this region. Northern Alberta businesses need to move their goods effectively and efficiently to the marketplace. During the past year, the NADC actively promoted the implementation of its *Northern Alberta Highways Strategy*. In particular, the Council worked with various northern stakeholders on the advancement of projects included in the Strategy. These included: the proposed highway connection across northern Alberta; the paving of Highway 88; the extension of Highway 58 west to Fort Nelson, British Columbia; and the paving of Highway 881. The Strategy is based on the use of special one-time funding and an approach that treats the highways in the Strategy on a similar basis. The Council continues its efforts towards the promotion of the implementation of the Strategy.

The NADC was requested to assist northern stakeholders with an initiative related to the enhancement of the Mackenzie Northern Railway between Smith, Alberta and Hay River, Northwest Territories. The Council agreed to provide administrative and research assistance to the working group. The objective of the working group is to encourage the provision of funding to upgrade the rail line. This initiative is being supported by the Co-Chairs for the *Alberta-Northwest Territories Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation and Development*.

The NADC collaborated with Alberta Economic Development and other northern stakeholders in a feasibility study to reopen the rail connection between Hythe, Alberta and Dawson Creek, British Columbia. This rail line has not carried traffic for several years and must be upgraded. Sources to fund the upgrading of the line are being identified.

Potential benefits from reopening the Hythe-Dawson Creek rail line include:

- More direct access to markets for Alberta and British Columbia Peace Region shippers;

-
- More efficient usage of northern highway and rail infrastructure;
 - Enhanced safety through the reduction of traffic congestion on highways;
 - Long-term environmental benefits from reduced greenhouse gas emissions by the transportation sector; and
 - Fostering future regional economic development initiatives through the retention of core transportation infrastructure and development of northern trade and transportation corridors.

The NADC participated in two studies on the feasibility of improving northern access to containers. Access to containers is attractive for shippers who export products. The study determined current and potential users and providers of containerized transportation; comparative costs and services of truck, rail-car and container transport; and current opportunities and constraints for rail container service in the Peace Region. Discussions among northern-based shippers, carriers and economic development organizations on improving container access and use are continuing.

Telecommunications

Implementation of the Alberta SuperNet project has commenced in northern communities. The NADC continues to monitor the rollout of this project.

Water Management

The NADC coordinated *Water Issues Workshops* in Cold Lake, Ardmore and Athabasca on March 31, April 1 and April 2, 2003. Northern Albertans face a number of opportunities and challenges regarding water management. The workshops gave participants information regarding various federal and provincial water programs and provided an opportunity to discuss issues and challenges faced over the past few years due to drought conditions in northeastern Alberta.

Opportunities Seminars

Two *Opportunities Seminars* were held in 2003-2004. The seminar held in Grande Cache on February 19 and 20, 2004, focused on resource development, tourism and Aboriginal issues, while the High Level *Opportunities Seminar*, held on March 11 and 12, 2004, highlighted transportation issues and cooperation between northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

Developing Northern Skill Levels

In cooperation with Alberta Learning, the NADC offers bursary programs to help increase skill levels in northern Alberta. The bursary programs (NADC Bursary, Bursary Partnerships Program and NADC Bursary for Medical Students) encourage northern students to train in occupations with shortages of northern labour. In 2003-2004, the NADC provided 270 bursaries to students:

- 137 from the NADC Bursary Program;
- 131 from the Bursary Partnerships Program; and
- 2 from the NADC Bursary for Medical Students.

Transportation remains a key priority for Council including air, rail and road transportation systems.

Two *Opportunities Seminars*, held in Grande Cache and High Level, highlighted opportunities for northern development.

Total bursary numbers are similar to last year's. The number of partnered bursaries was down somewhat, with a corresponding increase in NADC Bursaries. New this year is the Medical Bursary valued at \$5,000, or \$10,000 when matched by a sponsor; two co-sponsored Medical Bursaries were awarded.

NADC Bursary

The NADC Bursary is a \$3,000 return service bursary (\$1,500 for a half year of study). In the 2003-2004 year, 137 Alberta students were awarded a total of \$402,000 in bursaries. Emphasis was on health care, technical and education programs.

<i>Occupational Categories</i>	<i>Number of Bursaries</i>
Health Care, Nursing	37
Engineering, Technical	32
Education	28
Social Services	10
Natural Science, Environment	9
Humanities, Applied Arts	10
Business, Administration, Law	11
Total	137

NADC Bursary Recipients Return Service Rate: 74%

As part of the NADC Bursary program, students are required to enter into a reciprocal agreement to work in northern Alberta upon completion of their education. The return service rate measures compliance with this obligation. The rate includes both, those students in the process of completing their return service and those who have completed their obligation. Seventy-four percent (74%) of NADC Bursary recipients returned to work in the North after completing their education in 2003-2004. This is slightly below the Ministry's target of 75% (see table below).

<i>Reporting Year</i>	<i>Target for Return of Service</i>	<i>Actual Return of Service Rate</i>	<i>Education Completed Between</i>
2001-2002	75%	74%	Jan. 1, 1999 and Dec. 31, 2001
2002-2003	75%	78%	Jan. 1, 2000 and Dec. 31, 2002
2003-2004	75%	74%	Jan. 1, 2001 and Dec. 31, 2003

Source: Bursaries database

NADC Bursary for Medical Students

This was a new bursary introduced in 2003-2004. Medical students were able to receive a \$5,000 NADC Bursary that may be matched by sponsors for an additional \$5,000. Two such bursaries were awarded in 2003-2004. Both were matched by the same sponsor: Peace Country Health.

Bursary Partnership Program

In 2003-2004, 131 bursaries under the Bursary Partnership Program were awarded.

<i>Type of Sponsor</i>	<i>Number of Bursaries</i>
Business/Industry.....	40
Community/Other Organizations.....	74
School Divisions/Colleges.....	17
Total	131

Industry, small businesses and community organizations co-sponsor Bursary Partnerships with the NADC. The target was to confirm \$135,000 in matching funds from partners. The actual amount committed by partners was \$154,000. The NADC provided \$138,250 in matching dollars.

<i>Reporting Year</i>	<i>Number of Bursaries Awarded</i>	<i>Target for Partner Contributions</i>	<i>Actual Partner Contributions Received</i>	<i>NADC's Portion</i>
2001-2002	143	\$130,000	\$163,300	\$140,800
2002-2003	147	\$135,000	\$210,000	\$153,500
2003-2004	131	\$135,000	\$154,000	\$138,250

Source: Bursaries database

Northern Student Supplement

Northern Albertans with high financial need who are starting their post-secondary education can receive between \$500 and \$1,500 in grant funding through the Northern Student Supplement. In 2003-2004, a total of \$657,250 was awarded. 533 students from across northern Alberta in their first or second year of study received an average of \$1,233.

Practicum Placement Funding

During 2003-2004, the NADC worked with three northern Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) (Aspen, Northern Lights, Peace Country) to implement the Northern Alberta Health Care Practicum Placement

Pilot Program. Agreements were developed with the RHAs to distribute funding to encourage medical students from southern Alberta to take their practicums in the North. The Agreements are being implemented and students will be starting their northern practicums in 2004-2005. Five students shared \$6,402.60 in funding in the 2003-2004 fiscal year.

Awards, Bursaries and Scholarships Booklet

The NADC produced an awards booklet designed to assist northerners in acquiring funding for post secondary training and education. This booklet was distributed to all high schools, colleges and career centres in the North.

Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

Continued support was provided to the Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse, which is a joint initiative between the NADC and five northern Alberta colleges. The Clearinghouse provided timely information on northern economic and employment trends, opportunities and training needs. During 2003-2004, four reports were produced on current demographic and industry trends and training needs in northern Alberta.

Northern LINKS

Northern LINKS is a funding program coordinated by the NADC. Its purpose is to encourage students to complete high school and pursue post-secondary education. Types of projects include campus tours, student liaisons and speakers. In 2003-2004, 85 projects proceeded, benefiting nearly 5,000 students. 3,803 participants responded to the question "How well did this further your education goals?" The question received an average rating of 7.6 out of 10.

Different project types had different effectiveness ratings: retreats (3) scored highest with 8.7 followed by campus tours (44) at 8.0; skills competitions (1) at 7.8; speakers (6) at 7.5; mentorship and student liaison projects (15) at 6.8; career fairs (13) at 6.2; and other projects (computer software and resource centre) at 7.4. Thus retreats and campus tours bring the effectiveness average up while the "other" project types bring the average down.

Workshops for Students

As part of the program, *Northern LINKS* sponsored speaker workshops to help motivate students in their studies. This is critical as there are concerns about the dropout rate of students from high schools. The NADC supported schools to provide a series of workshops.

Phil Doucet gave two workshops in Bonnyville. Students rated the presentations at 8.8 but only gave 6.0 for the question, "How well did this project help further your educational goals?"

Bruce Balmer did a series of "Study Hints" workshops at 10 high schools in northwestern Alberta including Grande Prairie, Sexsmith, Beaverlodge, Valleyview, Donnelly, Peace River and Hines Creek. On average, students rated these workshop presentations as 9.0 and the question, "How well the workshop helped toward furthering your education goals?" as 7.3. Teachers, principals and guidance counsellors provided feedback and Mr. Balmer provided his impressions.

Mike Suto gave workshops based on “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens” to 700 students in nine schools in northeastern Alberta. The overall rating for the question, “How well did this help toward furthering your education goals?” was 8.3.

Woodland Operations Learning Foundation (WOLF)

WOLF is a non-profit, non-government organization striving to establish forest industry standards in training. WOLF’s membership from across the industry includes: 22 contractors, 13 manufacturers, 3 suppliers, 3 educational institutions and 4 government representatives. The NADC acts as an advisor to WOLF.

Over the past year, WOLF formed relationships with the Workers Compensation Board in British Columbia and Alberta, had a presence at trade shows, completed development of more courses, formed partnerships with Forest Industries Training in New Zealand and the Petroleum Institute Training Service, and has established relationships with Forest Industry Supplier and Loggers Association.

WOLF was present at four trade shows and conferences in four communities: Kamloops, Jasper, Vancouver and Prince George.

WOLF delivered programs for Weldwood, JHL Inc., Woodland Equipment Operator Program (WEOP), Logging Employment Training (LET), Watercourse Crossing, Maintenance and Service, and Log Quality. Students reached included: 10 for WEOP; 23 LET; 16 Custom Deliveries; 68 Water Crossing; 14 Log Quality; and 10 Maintenance and Service.

Youth Apprenticeship Program

In partnership with Alberta Learning, the NADC has established local steering committees for the implementation of the Youth Apprenticeship Learning Opportunities Project in three pilot communities: Lac La Biche; Wabasaca; and High Prairie.

Performance Measures

The NADC performance measures assess the contribution of NADC processes to the advancement of northern interests and the effectiveness of NADC bursary programs. Results from the *Challenge North 2003 Conference* are also reported below as these results were not available in time for inclusion in last year’s Annual Report.

Satisfaction with NADC's Contribution to Advancing Northern Interests

Northern leaders and NADC project partners and clients were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the NADC's "contribution to advancing northern interests."

Northern LINKS
continues to encourage
students to complete
high school and pursue
post-secondary
education.

Respondents were asked to express their satisfaction level on a scale of 1 to 10 (1=very dissatisfied; 10=very satisfied). Ninety-four percent (94%) of respondents rated their satisfaction level at 6 or higher (2003 - 95%). The average rating was 8.1 (2002 - 8.4), which slightly exceeded the Ministry's target of 8 out of 10.

The survey was a random telephone survey conducted by an independent consultant. During April 2004, 123 of 146 identified projects partners, clients and key leaders were surveyed. One respondent declined to answer the question relating to rating the NADC. Results are considered reliable to within +/- 5% at a 95% confidence interval.

NADC Bursary Recipients' Return Service Rate

NADC Bursary Programs include a requirement for students to enter into a reciprocal agreement to work in the North upon completion of their education. The return service rate measures compliance with this obligation. The rate includes both those students who are completing their return service and those who have fulfilled their obligation.

Return service rates are based on bursaries received by students who graduated in the previous three years. The current return service rate for the NADC Bursary is 74%, slightly below the Ministry's target of 75% (see table below).

	<i>2001-2002</i>	<i>2002-2003</i>	<i>2003-2004</i>
<i>Return of Service Target</i>	75%	75%	75%
<i>Return Service Rate</i>	74%	78%	74%
<i>Education Completed</i>	Jan. 1, 1999 to Dec. 31, 2001	Jan. 1, 2000 to Dec. 31, 2002	Jan. 1, 2001 to Dec. 31, 2003

Source: NADC Bursaries database

Challenge North Conference Delegates' Support for Identified Priorities

Every three years, the NADC hosts a major conference to gather input from northern stakeholders. The *Challenge North 2003 Conference* took place in Fort McMurray in April 2003, with 224 delegates in attendance. A key objective of the conference involved the ranking of priorities. In small, self-selected groups (based on topic categories), delegates were asked to review 140 previously identified issues, prioritize the issues and develop solutions that might be promoted and/or implemented for their priority issues.

The small group discussions resulted in 23 priority issues and associated top ranking solutions. All delegates were then asked to choose five issues and solutions that were most important to them, and to rank these choices in order of importance. One hundred four (104) delegates submitted responses. The top five issues and solutions identified by *Challenge North* delegates appear in the table below.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Solution</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Transportation and Infrastructure How to position northern Alberta's highway requirements.	Inform and lobby for a proactive northern transportation plan and a capital fund to develop northern roads.	1

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Solution</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Health and Social Services Per capita funding formulas for health and social services do not meet northern needs.	Identify the working transients and develop a method of data collection and communicate information to the public.	2
Labour Force Lack of housing services and recreational facilities in remote and high-growth communities hinders recruitment. Aboriginal people want more opportunities to participate in the mainstream economy.	Regional cost-sharing agreement to build and operate amenities (include all users, private and public).	3
Education and Training Accessibility.	Build a strong educational foundation.	4
Agriculture Lack of value-added agriculture development.	Government strategy to encourage value-added industries in the North.	5

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The NADC's members and staff will continue to focus on advancing northern development in the coming year. As in past years, there will be a number of good opportunities as well as challenges to address in order to realize the opportunities.

Transportation (air, rail and road) will remain a high priority for the Council. Continued improvements to the rail connection to northern ports on the west coast, the upgrading of the rail-line through northern Alberta to the Northwest Territories, the implementation of the *Northern Alberta Highways Strategy*, and the promotion of effective air transportation services for the North, are a few examples of key priority areas.

Adding value to northern resources will be a key area of interest next year for the Council, as it has been in past years. The Council wants to ensure that northern regions are considered as part of strategies that address value-added economic development in Alberta. Value-added production in the agricultural and forestry sectors was identified as an important issue at the *Challenge North 2003 Conference*.

Skill development and the retention and recruitment of labour in northern Alberta will continue to be a cornerstone to the work of the Council. The Council will implement its bursary programs, while looking at ways to better connect education and labour demands in the North.

The Council will work on inter-jurisdictional initiatives that will assist with the advancement of northern development. There are a number of excellent opportunities to work with neighbouring and northern jurisdictions in a way that will benefit northern Alberta. These are exciting opportunities and ones that will increase the awareness of the importance of the North.

The NADC's members and staff will continue to focus on advancing northern development in the coming year.