



Alberta

Northern Alberta Development Council

M. Cardinal

Mike Cardinal, MLA
NADC Chair

with our compliments

**Northern Alberta
Development Council** _____
_____ Annual Report 1996-97



Advancing

THE DEVELOPMENT OF
THE NORTHERN ECONOMY

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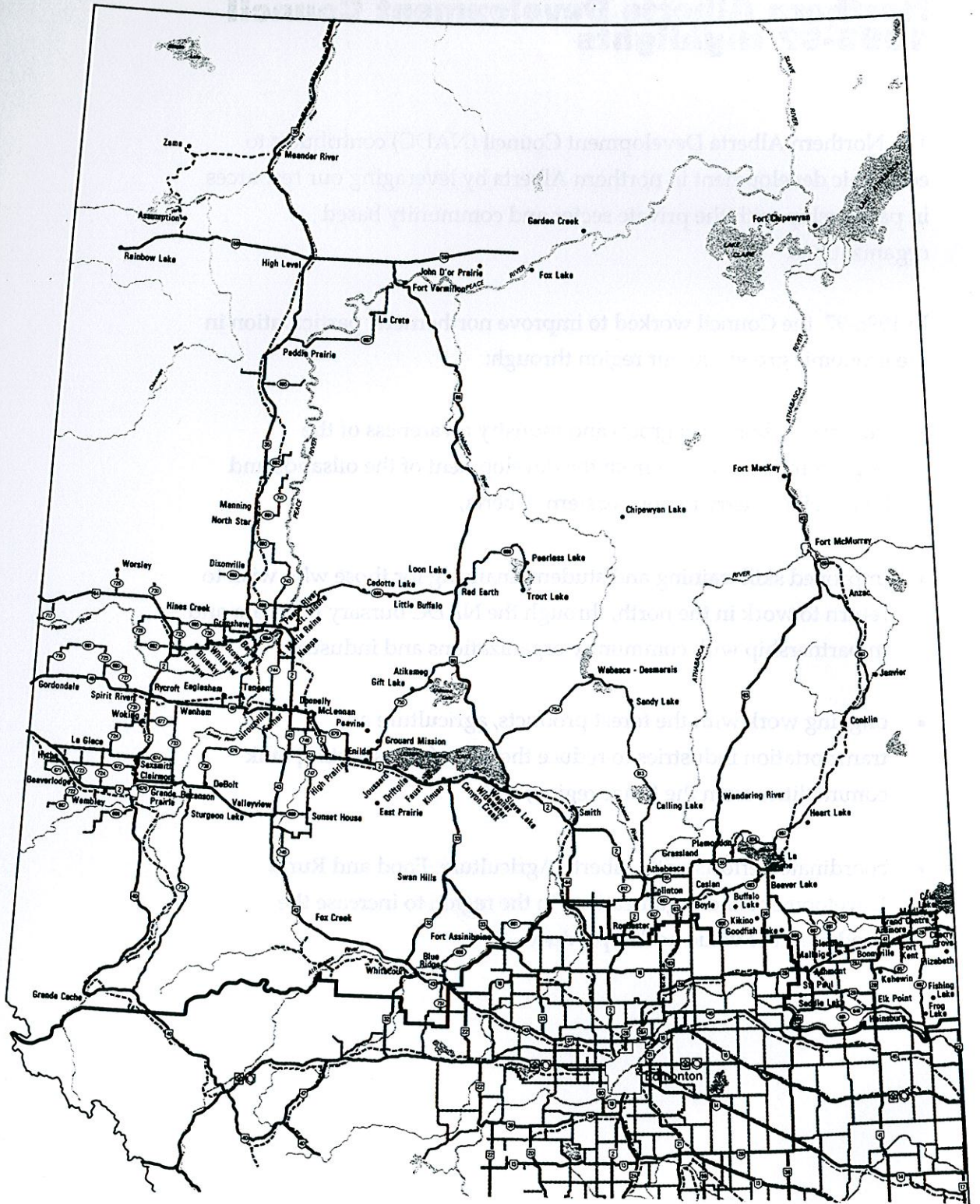
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Northern Alberta Development Council 1996-97 Highlights

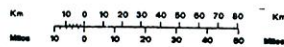
The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) contributes to economic development in northern Alberta by leveraging our resources in partnership with the private sector and community based organizations.

In 1996-97, the Council worked to improve northerners' participation in the economic growth in our region through:

- increased Aboriginal group and industry awareness of the opportunities resulting from the development of the oilsands and heavy oil industry in northeastern Alberta;
- improved skill training and student financing for those who wish to return to work in the north, through the NADC bursary program and in partnership with community organizations and industry;
- ongoing work with the forest products, agriculture and transportation industries to reduce the cost of transporting bulk commodities from the Peace region; and
- coordinated efforts with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and organizations in the region to increase the production of value-added products.



NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AREA



Produced by Provincial Mapping Branch, Surveying and Mapping Division © 1994

Operational Overview

The Act

The mandate of the Northern Alberta Development Council as outlined in the Act of Legislature is to "investigate, monitor, evaluate, plan and promote practical measures to foster and advance general development in northern Alberta."

The Council consists of seven public members and one elected member of the legislative assembly. The Council reports to Cabinet through Premier Klein, the Minister Responsible for Northern Development.

The NADC Region

The NADC region includes 60 per cent of Alberta's area and 10 per cent of its population. The region has a strong natural resource base which is still developing. For example, the North has all of Alberta's oilsands and most of the province's forest resources. Most of the markets for our products are in the United States or Pacific Rim. The issues of distance to markets and delivery of services in this vast part of Alberta are challenges that northerners address on a daily basis.

The North's population is younger than the provincial average. Education, literacy and income levels are below the provincial average. Many small Aboriginal communities face significant development challenges.

Council Members

Council membership reflects the geographic, cultural and vocational diversity of northern communities. The Council is currently chaired by Athabasca-Wabasca MLA Mike Cardinal. Council members for the 1996-97 fiscal year were:

Wayne Jacques, MLA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Chair

Irwin Packham, High Level, Deputy Chair

Louise Faulkner, McLennan

Greg Lindsay, Fort McMurray

Doug Sklar, Athabasca

Floyd Thompson, Lac La Biche

Don Wieben, Fairview

Charles Wood, Saddle Lake

Northern Development Branch

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www.nadc.gov.ab.ca

The Northern Development Branch has a small staff based in Peace River. The main role of the Branch is to support the work of the Northern Alberta Development Council to advance the development of the northern economy.

The Branch provides the administrative and technical support required by the Northern Alberta Development Council.

Staff carry out projects on behalf of the Council. Their work includes project planning and communication with industry, communities and government. The Branch carries out research, coordinates Council project activities and conducts NADC events and workshops.

Northern Development's Business Plan

Each department and agency of government produces a three year business plan to guide its operations. The highlights of Northern Development's current plan are to:

- promote emerging economic development opportunities by implementing initiatives in partnership with the private sector, community-based agencies, and government agencies to develop and implement strategies;
- strengthen the region's competitiveness by carrying out working sessions, workshops and conferences with the private sector and affiliated groups to target opportunities and requirements for development;
- continue to assist people to increase their skill levels to take advantage of opportunities; and
- continue to focus on practical ways to take advantage of the opportunities for development in the region.

Key Activities in 1996-97

Rail Transportation in Northwestern Alberta

Transportation is a vital link as the bulk of Peace region commodities are exported. The NADC continued its follow up to a major review initiated in 1995 on rail transportation and truck-to-rail service in northwestern Alberta. This review was in response to northern companies and communities stating that the costs for handling and transportation of commodities to ports consumed too much of the value of grain and other products.

Some Highlights

Our strategy has been gathering and sharing information about Peace production, profiling northern concerns and opportunities and building relationships.

- We co-sponsored a workshop with the Prince Rupert Port Corporation where northern shippers, truck and rail firms discussed the opportunities to use Prince Rupert Port facilities.
- A Federal Task Force was established to examine opportunities in the transportation corridor to Prince Rupert. The NADC participated in two subcommittees and submitted a position paper to the task force. We assisted the task force with public meetings in the Peace Country.
- Meetings were held with Canadian National Railway and northern stakeholders to discuss CN's proposal to transfer the Roma Junction - Hay River line. We helped a northern stakeholders group to work with CN and other stakeholders in the transition of this line.

Results

The results of our activities are:

- increased awareness of transportation and port officials who are examining their service to the region;
- a federal task force endorsed the recommendations of the NADC to improve services to the region;
- increased communication among northern shippers;
- the profile of the shortest route from the Peace country to Prince Rupert and to Asia has been raised; and
- it is now possible to truck grain directly to Prince Rupert Port.

The Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

The Clearinghouse is a joint initiative of the NADC and five northern Alberta colleges: Grande Prairie Regional College, Fairview College, Keyano College, Lakeland College and AVC - Lesser Slave Lake. All of the partners contribute equally to the project's annual budget. The Northern Development Branch manages the project on behalf of the partners.

Goals

- to improve the information that post-secondary institutions use to develop training programs which suit the northern economy;
- to improve the information base the NADC uses to advise government and northern organizations on labour market and economic circumstances in northern Alberta; and
- to foster co-operation among the member institutions in program planning and delivery.

Results

The Clearinghouse project combines statistical research, literature searches and interviews with experts to produce reports for the partners. In 1996-97, the project produced 10 reports including economic sector profiles, occupational profiles and training opportunity reports. Topics have included forestry, health professions and customer service training, among others.

Value-Added Agriculture in Northern Alberta

Northeastern Alberta

The NADC continued to lead an initiative to stimulate more value-added agricultural development in northeastern Alberta. A private sector steering committee provides direction for the project. They work closely with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAF&RD) and other agencies on implementation of the project. The steering committee is implementing the following strategies that will contribute to the region's agri-business growth:

- to create awareness and interest in agriculture value-added opportunities.

The first of a series of value-added information events was held in Lac La Biche in January 1997. The local agriculture service board organized this event. The Northern Development Branch provided support to the planning committee and during the event.

- to determine the viability of a commercial food processing facility which meets the needs of food processors in the region.

A feasibility study found that:

- there is interest in a shared food processing facility;
- a federally approved facility is preferred; and
- separate meat and baking processing units are needed.

A regional agribusiness promotional document has been produced to help promote northeastern Alberta to agribusiness investors from other parts of North America and abroad. The document will complement the "Alberta Advantage" marketing campaign. It will be distributed to departments, agencies, communities, export oriented northeastern businesses and others involved in attracting investment and promoting the agribusiness opportunities in Alberta.

To promote value-added agriculture in northwestern Alberta, the NADC established an inventory of existing value-added businesses in the region. Focus groups were held to identify the opportunities and barriers for expanding value-added agriculture in the region.

An advisory group of small-scale food processors was brought together in February 1997 to discuss the potential for a value-added workshop to begin to address some of the opportunities and issues identified in the focus groups.

Together Toward Tomorrow Conference and Trade Show

In response to recent announcements from Alberta's heavy oil industry, the NADC together with Aboriginal communities and industry in the Lakeland region, identified the need to build business relationships between Aboriginal businesses, communities and industry in the region and the need to share information regarding business opportunities and Aboriginal businesses in the region.

Under the guidance of a regional steering committee made up of Aboriginal leaders and industry, the NADC planned a trade show and conference to begin to address these needs. This event took place February 19 and 20, 1997 in Cold Lake.

The objectives of the event were to:

- facilitate the sharing of information regarding future employment, business opportunities in the region and requirements of industry in the region;

- facilitate the sharing of information regarding Aboriginal business' capacity and skills;
- build relationships and provide information about employment opportunities; and
- determine follow-up actions to increase communication, business and employment opportunities.

Close to two hundred delegates attended this event. In a follow-up to this conference, a debriefing meeting was held with industry, Aboriginal leaders and businesses. A local working committee was established to develop an Aboriginal Business Association in the region. The Association would assist its members in accessing business opportunities in the region. In the next fiscal year, this organization is expected to be established.

Community Timber Permit Program

The NADC, at the request of Alberta Environmental Protection, began a review of the program that provides wood to small loggers and sawmills.

The NADC formed an advisory steering committee to help guide the process and offer advice on reports. This committee included small sawmill and logging company representatives, new program applicants and department officials.

This research project includes three key phases: a background report, focus groups and consultations, and recommendations.

The objectives of the review are to:

- evaluate Land and Forest Service implementation of NADC recommendations;
- review implementation of new procedures;
- review program's wood permit issuing process; and
- assess the positive and negative changes.

The NADC expects to prepare a set of recommendations for industry and government consideration by June, 1997.

Northern Alberta Development Council Bursary

Return Service Bursaries

In the 1996-97 year, 132 bursaries of \$3,000 were awarded to Alberta students. Recipients were chosen from among 367 applications. Students in engineering and technical fields received close to one fifth of all bursaries, followed closely by students in health care and nursing, and in education. An increased number of recipients were in programs related to business administration and law.

Occupational category	Number of bursaries in 1996-97
Education	18
Medical Professions	5
Health Care/Nursing	22
Social Services	20
Business/Administration/Law	21
Engineering/Technical	24
Natural Sciences/Environment	15
Humanities/Social Sciences	6
Other	1
Total	132

Monitoring return service among bursary recipients is an ongoing activity. Annual return service rates are based on recipients who graduated in the previous three years. The current return service rate is 72 per cent.

Bursary Partnership Program

Through the Bursary Partnership Program, community organizations and industry co-sponsor bursaries for students in post-secondary education. The number of sponsors grew from 18 to 32. These sponsors contributed \$134,450 and supported 104 bursaries. The total value of the bursaries is close to \$230,000.

Return Service Bursaries 1996-97

Type of sponsor	Number of bursaries
Businesses/Industry	41
Community Organizations	39
School Divisions/Colleges	14
Other	10
Total	104

Federal/Provincial Agreement

Northern Alberta Agreement

The Canada/Alberta Cooperation Agreement on Northern Development (known as the Northern Alberta Agreement) is one of the Federal/Provincial Western Economic Partnership Agreements. The partners in the Northern Alberta Agreement are Industry Canada and the Northern Development Branch. The Agreement was a \$9 million program. However, in accordance with federal and provincial government expenditure reductions, the program was reduced by more than 20 per cent.

The provincial partner administers the Agreement. Applications for assistance were accepted until December 1994 and the final funding decisions were made by March 1995. Approved projects were required to be completed by March 1997. Final project payments will be made in the 1997-98 fiscal year.

In accordance with the Federal/Provincial Agreement, a final program evaluation is being conducted. The independent evaluation will assess the extent to which the Agreement achieved its purpose and objectives. The evaluation will be completed by December 31, 1997.

Performance Measures

The NADC measures its performance through an annual customer satisfaction survey and by tracking statistics related to our bursary programs.

The survey targets our partners, clients and northern leaders. They rate their satisfaction with our contribution to economic development in the north. This year, 82% said the NADC made a positive contribution to northern economic development.

To measure the effectiveness of the bursary program, we track the number of students who receive bursary assistance and their rates of return service in the north. Rate of return service is a measure of how training applies to a student's employability. This year, the rate was 72%, which is on target to meet our goal of 75% by 1998-99.

The Bursary Partnership Program co-sponsors bursaries with northern community organizations, businesses and industry. In each fiscal year, we also measure the amount of funds contributed or committed by our partners for the Bursary Partnership Program. The Program leveraged \$134,000 this year, up from \$93,000 last year. This is on target to meet our goal of \$150,000 by 1998-99.

Financial Results

Expenditures by Program

	Authorized	Actual	Variance
Northern Alberta Development Council	1,021,000	1,008,943	12,057
Dedicated Clearinghouse Revenue	(45,000)	(45,000)	0
Canada/Alberta Partnership Agreement (Northern Alberta Agreement)	1,109,000	837,775	271,225
Total	2,085,000	1,801,718	283,282

Expenditures by Category

	Authorized	Actual	Variance
Manpower	671,000	644,847	26,153
Supplies and Services	494,000	449,448	44,552
Grants	950,000	738,673	211,327
Other Expenditures	15,000	13,750	1,250
Dedicated Clearinghouse Revenue	(45,000)	(45,000)	0
Total	2,085,000	1,801,718	283,282