

**Northern Alberta  
Development Council  
Annual Report**

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*1999 - 2000*

October, 2000



## Message from the Chair

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) is pleased to present its annual report for 1999 – 2000.

The Council focuses its efforts to advanced the development of the northern economy. In 1999 – 2000 initiatives were carried out in the following areas:

- Promoting emerging development opportunities;
- Addressing barriers to economic growth, and;
- Increasing northern skill levels to take advantage of economic opportunities.

The NADC's success is based on the contributions of our project partners and input from stakeholder in northern development. Together we will continue to build a strong northern region.



Mike Cardinal, MLA

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## Operational Overview

### Core Businesses

**The Act** - The mandate of the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) 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 NADC Region** - Northern Alberta has a diverse resource base and is a key contributor to the economy with 100 per cent of all oil sands production and 90 per cent of its forests. It has almost 40 per cent of Alberta’s conventional oil and gas activity and about 20 per cent of the province’s agricultural land. Yet, only about 250,000 people, or less than 10 per cent of Alberta’s population, live there. Billions of dollars have been invested in northern Alberta, but geography and a lack of education and training often prevent the people who live there from benefiting from these opportunities.

**Council Members** - Council membership reflects the geographic, cultural and vocational diversity of northern communities. In 1999 - 2000 Council was chaired by Athabasca-Wabasca MLA Mike Cardinal. Private Council members were:

Art Avery, Fort McMurray  
Alvin Billings, High Prairie  
Don Erno, Sexsmith  
Ernie Isley, Cold Lake  
Gerald McIvor, Whitecourt  
Floyd Thompson, Lac La Biche  
Al Toews, Fort Vermilion



**Northern Development's Business Plan** - The NADC's mission is to advance northern development through regional initiatives in partnership with the private sector and community-based organizations. Northern Alberta has tremendous potential for growth. The NADC supports government's commitment to prosperity by facilitating the development of a thriving and progressive northern economy. In 1999 – 2000, NADC focused on three goals:

- to receive input into priority northern development opportunities and issues.
- to promote opportunities and address barriers to the north's development.
- to increase northern skill levels.

## Results Analysis

### Goal 1

*To receive input into priority northern development opportunities and issues.*

**Goal 1** *To receive input into priority northern development opportunities and issues.*

The NADC consults with northerners and conducts initial investigation of issues and opportunities with appropriate northern stakeholders and government departments.

Northern Alberta Development Council members and staff consult with stakeholders all over the north through a formal consultation framework, community visits, and regional tours.

**Leaders' Roundtables** – The NADC meets with northerners to help identify development opportunities and barriers in the north.

In 1999-2000 roundtable meetings were held in Peace River, Fort McMurray, Whitecourt, and Slave Lake. Meetings were well attended and a broad range of issues such as telecommunications needs, labour force training and retention needs, regulations, tourism opportunities, municipal infrastructure, transportation needs, forest industry opportunities, and agriculture industry needs were discussed. All participants received a meeting summary and information on NADC's actions as a follow up to the concerns raised.



**Challenge North: Planning for Progress Conference** - The NADC held this major conference, March 29 – 31, 2000, in Grande Prairie, to help establish priorities and strategic directions to guide future development in the north. Speakers presented an overview of growth in the north and emerging factors that have an affect on future development. Two hundred and seventy-five leaders from communities, industry, education, health, government and other organizations discussed key demographic, economic, environmental and social issues and made a number of recommendations. The NADC will follow up on these recommendations through its future business plans and other initiatives.

**Goal 2** *To promote opportunities and address barriers to the North's development.*

The NADC works with other jurisdictions as well as within the region to address barriers to economic growth, researches information and carries out strategic initiatives to promote emerging development opportunities.

**Alberta – NWT Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** - In October, 1998 Alberta signed a MOU with the Northwest Territories to address shared priorities. The NADC was appointed to the Alberta co-chair. The NADC has monitored the MOU and is awaiting the confirmation of the NWT co-chair. Contact has been made with NWT government officials in regards to the coordination of a meeting of the co-chairs to review the MOU and decide on future actions.

### Transportation

The NADC continues to address transportation opportunities of significance to northern Alberta. As most of the region's products are exported, northern Albertans are concerned about rail and road infrastructure. The NADC is participating in the Western Canadian Corridors and Ports Initiative (WCC&PI), made up of shippers, carriers, facility operators, labour and government representatives and the Northwest Development Corporation (NWDC). These organizations are working on a long-term strategic plan to improve the handling and transportation of commodities, remove unnecessary regulatory and other impediments, deal with transportation implications of

**Goal 2**

*To promote opportunities and address barriers to the North's development.*



increasing value-added production and improve transportation education, training and information. NADC staff have periodically met with the Peace River Regional District of British Columbia to discuss common issues and to coordinate plans.

On December 16, 1999, NADC hosted a meeting in order to bring all key stakeholders together with a common interest to look at the possibilities of all-weather road access from Fort McMurray to Fort Chipewyan. As a result, it was decided that a memorandum of understanding had to be developed and signed by all interest groups with the community of Fort Chipewyan. Once the M.O.U is drawn up, a working group will be set up for a series of meetings with the purpose of developing strategies to build and complete the highway between the two communities.

The NADC has provided the Working Group with background information on the role of Highway No. 88 in terms of the provincial highway system, as well as assistance with the preparation of a report on this project.

Staff continue to monitor progress and developments related to the Northwestern Canadian Integrated Road Network Concept Plan.

**Northern Alberta Recycling Initiative** - The NADC has provided advisory services to the northern recycling organization known as Northern Coordinated Action for Recycling Enterprises. Over the past year, the NADC has provided assistance in relation to: organization of community consultation meetings; liaison with the Provincial Government; and the investigation of recycling development opportunities in northern Alberta.

**Market Opportunities for Alternative Livestock Products** - The Northern Alberta Development Council worked closely with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAFRD); the Metis Settlements General Council; and elk, wild boar and bison producers to complete a research project on the viability of alternative livestock market opportunities and secondly how producers might work together to capitalize on identified opportunities.



**Western Economic Partnership Agreement** - The NADC is participating in a number of projects funded by the Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA) between Alberta and the federal department of Western Economic Diversification. Funds were provided to build improved telecommunications services to several northern communities. These services were needed to allow them access to video conferencing for training, telemedicine, high speed Internet access and other uses. Investment by telephone companies for standard solutions provide a low or negative rate of return.

Additional funds were provided to extend the network of Alberta North (a consortium of northern colleges) community access point sites to other communities. Alberta North, formed in 1994, is a partnership of six northern post secondary institutions. Currently, Alberta North has 24 off-campus community access points (CAP) sites in northern Alberta. CAPs are educational centres which are electronically connected to northern post-secondary institutions and to each other. These CAPs enable learners to receive courses, programs and educational services (career assessment, advice, admissions, registration and library). The capital requested will be used to provide telecommunication access and distance learning technologies such as video-conferencing and audiographics equipment.

WEPA funding is supporting a two-year project that will assist the development of the bison industry and fund bison research projects in the following areas: bison genetics, nutrition and management; effect of stress due to transportation and meat analysis.

**Tourism Industry Development** – The NADC continues to provide support to the northern tourism industry through ex-officio board participation with the Alberta North Tourism Destination Region. The NADC sponsored and staff co-chaired the *Northern Exposure II Tourism Conference* held in Grande Prairie, November 17-19, 2000. The NADC partnered with 12 other tourism marketing and industry development organizations in hosting this event.

The purpose of the conference was to provide northern Alberta's growing tourism industry with educational sessions and a forum for networking between tourism operators, tourism marketing organizations, and key industry service providers. Conference content was based on a survey of the northern tourism industry



and input from the conference planning team. Information gathered from the 95 delegates who attended the conference will guide the NADC's follow up work in the priority areas of product development and encouraging coordinated support service delivery.

**Value-added Agriculture: Assessment, Promotion and Awareness of Value- Added Agriculture Opportunities in the Peace Region** – 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 focused on an awareness and promotion strategy related to value-added agriculture (processing and diversification) in the Alberta and British Columbia Peace region.

The actions in this project will raise awareness of the Peace Region's comparative advantages, and the benefits and opportunities for the region 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, provide direction to commodity-based organizations and entrepreneurs 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.

**Electric Power Workshops in Northern Alberta** - In response to concerns about the future of the electricity industry, the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) held two information workshops in northern Alberta. Alberta Resource Development collaborated with the NADC to present workshops that helped to address concerns about electricity supply, price, markets, new opportunities and customer choice options.

More than one hundred representatives from Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, business, local government, the resource industry including oil/gas and forestry firms and public institutions attended events at Athabasca and Peace River.



**Goal 3** *To increase northern skill levels.*

The NADC works to increase students' financial capacity to access employment related to post-secondary training and increase the availability of training programs that meet northern employment needs.

**Goal 3**

*To increase northern skill levels.*

**Northern LINKS Program** - Northern LINKS is a program intended to ease the transition for Northern Alberta students completing high school and attending a post secondary institution. Those that can apply include post-secondary institutions, schools and school jurisdictions, community, regional and other organizations and industry and business. Some examples of potential projects are mentorship, orientation, campus tours, and peer support. The target groups for the projects are primarily grade 12 students, and first and second year post-secondary students from the North region. Northern LINKS will provide funding for a variety of projects from \$500 to \$50,000.

**Northern Student Supplement** - The Northern Student Supplement is a new bursary available to first and second year northern post-secondary students. The bursary is a joint initiative between NADC and Alberta Learning. It is supplemental to the Alberta Opportunities Bursary, a province-wide bursary program. In this second year of the Northern Student Supplement, 558 students received an award, for a total of \$633,500.

**Northern Alberta Development Council Bursary** - The NADC Bursary is a \$3000 return service bursary (\$1500 for a half year of study). In the 1999 - 2000 year, 126 Alberta students were awarded the bursary. They were chosen from among 336 applicants. This year an increased number of students in education and health fields received a bursary. Bursaries were given to students in the following occupational categories:

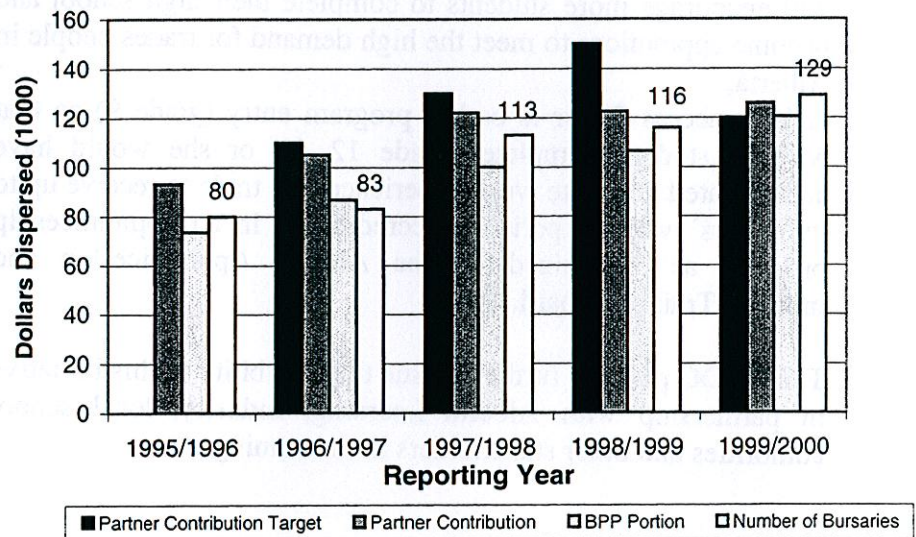
Occupational categories	Number of bursaries
Engineering/Technical	25
Education	25
Health Care/Nursing	24
Natural Sciences/Environment	17
Social Services	10
Business/Administration/Law	15
Humanities/Social Sciences	5
Fine & Applied Arts	5
Total	126



**Bursary Partnerships Program** - Through Bursary Partnerships, the NADC co-sponsors bursaries for post-secondary students with industry, small businesses and community organizations. Last year the number of sponsors grew from 38 to 41. These sponsors contributed over \$126,000 and supported 129 bursaries. The total value of the bursaries is close to \$250,000.

Type of sponsor	Number of bursaries
Business/Industry	51
Community/Other Organizations	54
School Divisions & Colleges	24
Total	129

**Bursary Partnership Program Funding**



**Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse** – The Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse project is a joint initiative between the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) and four northern Alberta colleges; Fairview College, Northern Lakes College, Lakeland College and Keyano College. The project was created in 1995 to provide the colleges with labour force and economic information to help them identify new training programs, or to modify or cancel existing ones. Reports that are prepared by the Clearinghouse cover the areas of industry, specific occupations and training opportunities, as well as on other related topics such as demographic trends and community needs. The Clearinghouse also serves as a potential forum for further communication and cooperation between the



partners. In 1999-2000, the Clearinghouse produced 12 reports that covered a wide range labour force and training issues.

**Career Choices - Apprenticeship Pilot Project** - Earlier this year, the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) began preliminary work on ways to encourage more Aboriginal youth participation in career development opportunities, particularly the Registered Apprenticeship Program. The program provides a different way to earn a high school diploma and seems to be a model of training that Aboriginal communities feel is particularly suited to them.

The NADC believes more can be done to expose students to a wide range of trades and technologies early on. Hopefully this will encourage more students to complete their high school and become apprentices to meet the high demand for trades people in Alberta.

A key success factor is earlier program entry (grade 9) so that when a student completes grade 12, he or she would have accumulated adequate work experience in a trade to receive up to two years' work experience accreditation in an apprenticeship program as recognized by the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board.

The NADC plans to further pursue the feasibility of this initiative in partnership with Alberta Learning, industry, local school authorities and other stakeholders in the coming year.