

Northern Leaders' Summit



Proceedings Report

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Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Northern Alberta Development Council, I am pleased to present the proceedings from the **Northern Leaders' Summit**.

Thank you to all who attended the summit and for the contributions of each participant in our discussions of the present and future of northern Alberta. You helped make it a success! Your priorities are being integrated into the Northern Alberta Development Council's strategic and operational plans.

Moreover, your candid conversations provided insight to the attending Cabinet Ministers on the realities of our region. As well, follow up will occur on individual issues by the Ministers.

I hope you find this document useful as you engage other northerners in this discussion and continue to share your thoughts on northern development with the Government of Alberta.



Pearl Calahasen
Chair
Northern Alberta Development Council
MLA Lesser Slave Lake



The Northern Alberta Development Council

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) champions the cause of Alberta's northern economies and communities by exploring opportunities for growth, and developing programs and services to facilitate this growth.

The Council is made up of nine public members and a Chair who is a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) of Alberta. The Council reports through the Chair to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations. Council membership reflects the geographic, cultural and vocational diversity of northern communities.

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 and to advise the Government accordingly.” The NADC supports the government’s commitment to prosperity by facilitating the development of a thriving and progressive northern economy.



*Hon. Frank Oberle
Minister of Aboriginal Relations
MLA, Peace River*

*CURRENT MEMBERS
Pearl Calahasen, Chair
MLA, Lesser Slave Lake*

*Williard Strebchuk, Vice-Chair,
Whitecourt*

Brian Allen, Grimshaw

André Harpe, Valhalla Centre

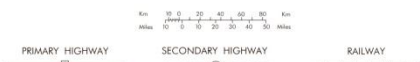
Pat O’Neill, St. Paul

Ken Noskey, Peavine Metis Settlement

Eva Urlacher, Cold Lake



NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AREA



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

Introduction

The Northern Leaders' Summit, the first meeting of its kind, provided an opportunity for northern elected leaders to share their perspectives on the priorities for northern development in Alberta. Through conversations outlining community and regional priorities, cabinet ministers from diverse portfolios heard firsthand about northern concerns and challenges. Delegates included northern Members of the Legislative Assembly, mayors and reeves, First Nation Chiefs, Metis Settlement Chairs and Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) members.

The summit facilitated conversations between provincial and northern leadership to determine northern priorities and opportunities. Ministers and northern community leaders had the chance to report on progress, share successful practices, and determine future methods of collaboration for regional initiatives and programming. The outcomes from these discussions provided direction to support the NADC's strategic and operational plans.

The event began with welcoming remarks from the Chair of the NADC, Pearl Calahasen, and the Honourable Frank Oberle, Minister of Aboriginal Relations. Premier Alison Redford delivered a lunch keynote and the day concluded with a presentation on northern priorities using instant polling technology.

Throughout the day, delegates had the opportunity to engage in small regional group discussions with cabinet ministers. Concurrent discussion sessions ran for 30 minutes and delegates were able to ask ministers questions on a variety of topics. Several key themes were highlighted during conversations with ministers responsible for:

- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Human Services
- Community Relations (Aboriginal Relations and Municipal Affairs)
- Transportation
- Innovation and Advanced Education
- Health

The key themes, categorized by region, and a broad overview of each discussion group are presented in the following pages, as well as the results from the instant polling priority presentation.

This report is intended to support ongoing regional discussions on northern issues and strengthen the priorities identified during the summit. If you require further details on the topics discussed at the Northern Leaders' Summit summarized in this document, please contact the NADC.

Agriculture and Rural Development

Discussion Leads:

Honourable Verlyn Olson, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

Honourable Wayne Drysdale, Minister of Transportation

Brian Allen, NADC Member, Moderator

*All Regions

- Grain Shipping

*Northwest

- Information and Communications Technology to Improve Community Vitality
- Agricultural Societies
- Highway and Bridge Maintenance
- Trade Corridors

*Northeast

- Access to Water
- Rural Development
- Beef Industry

*North Central

- Beef Industry
- U.S. Markets
- Trade Corridors

**Discussion topics by region.*



Minister Olson discussed federal commitments to improving grain shipping, and supported moving products either west or south. He also identified that the loss of the Canadian Wheat Board has allowed for a clearer examination of container and market access issues in the system.

The minister also discussed the current beef processing plants in Alberta and the recent changes to food inspection processes. The Government of Alberta continues to lobby the American government for changes to the Country of Origin Labelling policy in the U.S. Farm Bill, while working to secure other markets for Alberta beef in Korea and the European Union.

Discussions on rural development focused on Internet connectivity from the Alberta Supernet to the final miles. Without suitable service providers, small businesses and families are left without access to high speed Internet. Delegates spoke about how this is affecting economic and community development in the north.

Minister Olson also discussed important attributes for successful rural development, such as access to water and supports like the Regional Economic Development Alliances (REDAs). The minister encouraged delegates to share their rural development concerns with the newly appointed *Rural Economic Development Task Force*.

Human Services

Discussion Lead:

Honourable Manmeet Bhullar, Minister of Human Services
Eva Urlacher, NADC Member, Moderator

*Northwest

- Family and Community Support Services
- Childcare/ Daycare
- Jurisdictional Boundary to providing services
- Access to Services

*Northeast

- Social Policy Framework and Family and Community Engagement Councils
- Aboriginal Children in Care
- Homeless Shelters in Northern Alberta
- Homelessness vs. Houseless Income Support

*North Central

- Training Needs
- Training Locations
- Sustainable Housing
- Daycare Costs
- Child and Family Services Authority Boards Disbanded
- Children in Care

**Discussion topics by region.*

Minister Bhullar spoke with delegates about the *Social Policy Framework* and its focus to “put people first.” The Family and Community Engagement Councils link Human Services to communities and guide the proper implementation of the policies emerging from the new framework. He also addressed questions about the over-representation of Aboriginal children in foster care. A review of the current legislation, open sharing of government information, and implementation of new, proven models (such as *Signs of Safety*) are steps currently underway to support Aboriginal children in care. The minister also spoke of the government’s efforts to keep Aboriginal children in care in their communities.

Delegates described northern housing issues to Minister Bhullar and their relation to income supports and the transient workforce. The minister spoke of several ongoing initiatives, including work with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to build an updated housing strategy.

Other impediments to personal economic stability for northerners discussed included access to training and upgrading in home communities, access and affordability of childcare for working families, and access to additional funding to support programs like Family and Community Support Services.

Community Relations (Aboriginal Relations and Municipal Affairs)

Discussion Leads:

Honourable Ken Hughes, Minister of Municipal Affairs
 Honourable Frank Oberle, Minister of Aboriginal Relations
 Ken Noskey, NADC Member, Moderator

*Northwest

- Municipal Sustainability Initiative Operating Funds
- Small Airports
- Wastewater Issues
- Shadow Population
- Landlocked Communities
- Linear Assessment
- East West Connector
- Seniors Housing
- Small Schools

*Northeast

- Municipal Sustainability Initiative Operating Funds
- Financing of infrastructure
- Métis Settlement
- Regional Municipalities
- Linear Assessment
- Shadow Population
- Highway 88
- Policing Costs
- Housing
- Municipal – Aboriginal Collaboration
- First Nations Economic Development

*North Central

- Regional Collaboration Grant
- Housing
- First Nation
- Disaster Planning
- Highway 63
- Metis Settlements
- Bridge Infrastructure
- High Prairie Hospital
- Municipal Government Act Review

**Discussion topics by region.*

Several delegates were interested in the *Regional Collaboration Grant* and its limitations on partnerships. Minister Hughes indicated that funding will be increased to a total of \$78 million by 2016 and encouraged applications. Delegates described other funding issues with linear assessments, MSI Operating Funds, the shadow population, and policing.

Delegates were also interested in the Municipal Government Act (MGA) review and its implications on First Nation and Métis communities, and their ability to collaborate with municipalities and towns. Delegates also saw potential to incorporate disaster planning into the MGA during the review.

Metis Settlements and First Nations looked to Minister Oberle for support for improved infrastructure and economic development in Alberta's Aboriginal communities.

Both ministers were also presented with specific northern infrastructure concerns, including roads, bridges, airports, water treatment, housing and hospitals, and the challenges to finance these projects from a community perspective.

Innovation and Advanced Education

Discussion Lead:

Honourable Dave Hancock, Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education
Brian Allen, NADC Member, Moderator

*All Regions

- Barriers to Education
- Skills Development

*Northwest

- Recruitment of Professionals
- Internet Access
- Regional Economic Development Alliances Support

*Northeast

- Education Institution Funding Cuts

*North Central

- Temporary Foreign Workers

**Discussion topics by region.*



The majority of discussions surrounded barriers to education and skills development. Northern residents have difficulty accessing post-secondary education in their home communities. Delegates commented that the costs of accessing training, for rural residents, are extremely high, especially when compared to urban residents, while the need for training is widespread. Then-Deputy Premier Hancock recognized the barriers and challenges that many post-secondary institutes faced last year and cited e-Campus Alberta as a possible option for some northern students.

He also described a variety of opportunities and partnerships that are helping provide skills development and training in northern communities. These initiatives include engaging Aboriginal people and 'growing our own' skilled labour to reduce reliance on temporary foreign workers.

In addition, he spoke about training apprentices and journeymen in the north and highlighted the success of dual-credit programming and Career and Technologies Studies Modules. He was optimistic these practices would also improve recruitment of young professionals by keeping students connected to their home communities.

Transportation

Discussion Leads:

Honourable Wayne Drysdale, Minister of Transportation
 Honourable Frank Oberle, Minister of Aboriginal Relations
 Ken Noskey, NADC Member, Moderator

*Northwest

- East-West Connector
- Highway 58 to Fort Nelson
- Grande Prairie Regional College (GPRC) Bypass
- Highway 35
- Highway 986
- Quality of Maintenance on Highways
- Highway 40
- Railways
- Transportation Corridors
- Peace River Bridge

*Northeast

- Highway 28
- Water for Life
- Financing for infrastructure
- Toll Roads
- Funding for Bridge Infrastructure
- Secondary Highways
- First Nations Infrastructure
- Highway 881
- Special Economic Zone

*North Central

- Highway 855
- East-West Connector
- Bridge Maintenance & Investment
- Access to West coast
- Quality of Maintenance on Highways
- Lack of Traffic Information
- Water for Life Program
- Highway Planning
- Provincial Investments in North

**Discussion topics by region.*

Delegates spoke strongly and broadly about transportation priorities in the north, including concerns with financing, planning, maintenance, connectivity and investing in northern infrastructure.

The minister addressed concerns around bridge repair and construction, and the maintenance of highways. Maintenance operations in certain regions have led to unsafe road conditions this winter, and certain bridges in the north may soon be unsafe. Multiple communities commented on the high costs of repairing and constructing new infrastructure. Delegates inquired about whether funding for such projects would be available from the province, as these costs are very high and difficult for many communities to bear on their own.

Both delegates and the ministers confirmed support for the proposed East-West Connector. In addition, delegates supported rail transportation to the west coast. Delegates also explored the possibility of tolls to finance construction on routes that are used heavily by industrial traffic.

Delegates were also interested in the current status of the *Water for Life* program and possible additional funding. Minister Drysdale agreed on the importance of the program, but indicated there would be no new funding under this initiative.

Health

Discussion Lead:

Honourable Fred Horne, Minister of Health
Eva Urlacher, NADC Member, Moderator

*Northwest

- Challenges of communication with Alberta Health Services
- Communities are Providing More Services that some Hospitals
- Doctor Shortages
- Community Consultations
- Regional Collaboration
- Need for Northern Health Summit

*Northeast

- Loss of Resources
- Metis Settlements Research Data Use
- Recruitment and Retention Issues
- Health Zones
- Long Term Care and Home Care
- Hospital Fundraising
- First Nations Impact to Surrounding Communities Services

*North Central

- Red Earth Creek facility not providing Services
- Recruitment of EMT
- First Responders
- Sharing Resources and Jurisdiction
- Access to Renal Services
- Diabetes Workshops
- Prescription Drug Abuse
- Tele-health Conferencing
- Recruitment and Retention of Physicians and Health Care Professionals
- First Nations and Métis health programs

**Discussion topics by region.*

Delegates spoke at length about the lack of physicians in the north. They also identified difficulties supporting physicians who are new to Canada and other hurdles of the recruitment and retention process. Minister Horne confirmed that Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services (AHS) are working to develop tools aimed at helping communities and new physicians address these reoccurring issues. He also spoke about the distribution of physicians and the shortage of certain specialists.

Second to physician recruitment was a discussion about health professionals in general, their recruitment and retention, and training opportunities in the north. The minister presented examples of training health care providers in the north and expanding the scope of practice of some health professionals to meet demands.

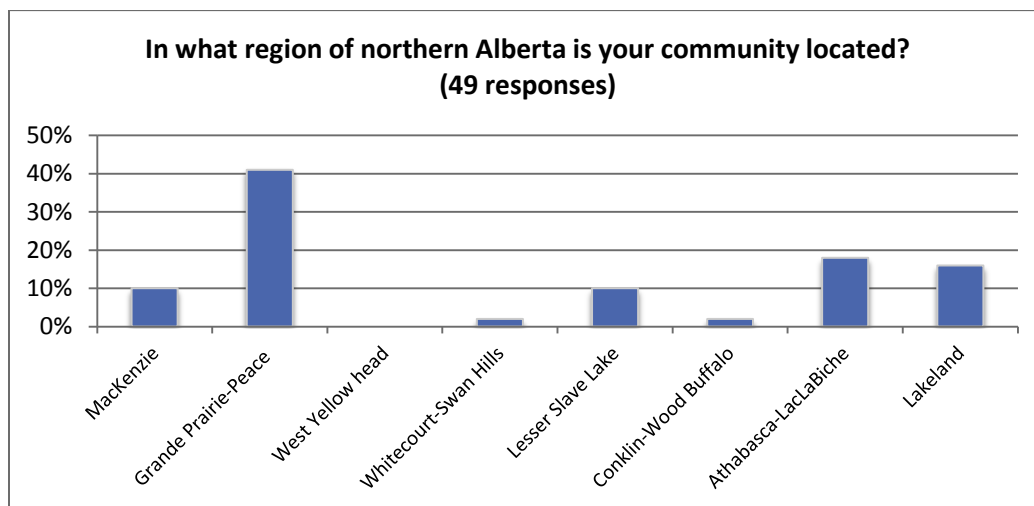
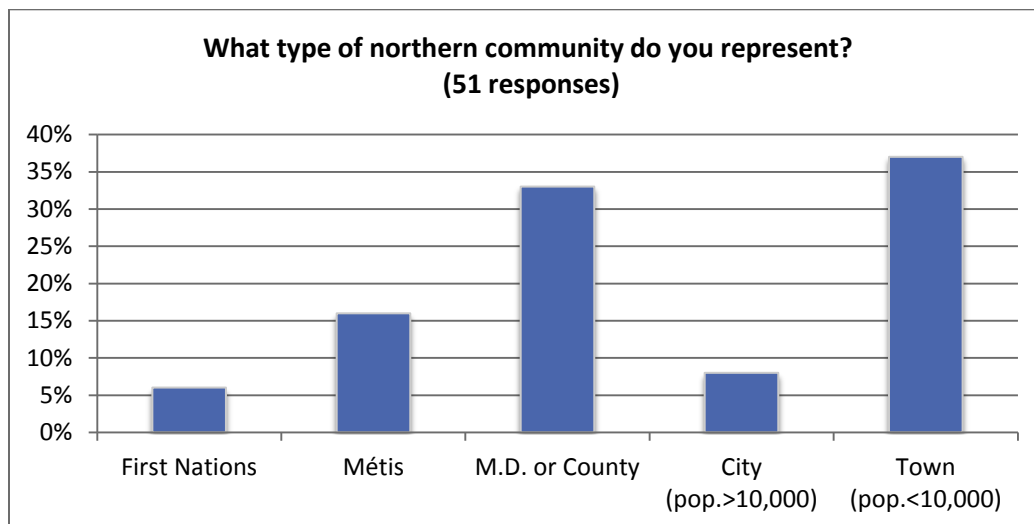
Conversations also touched on specific Aboriginal health issues and access, including problems accessing programs and health care treatments in home communities, which in some cases is due to 'jurisdictional red tape'.

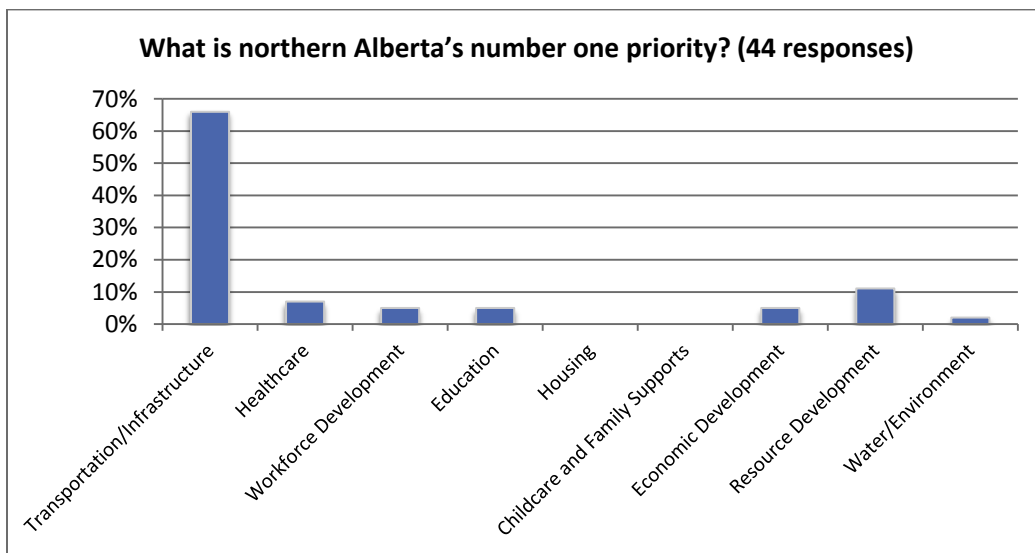
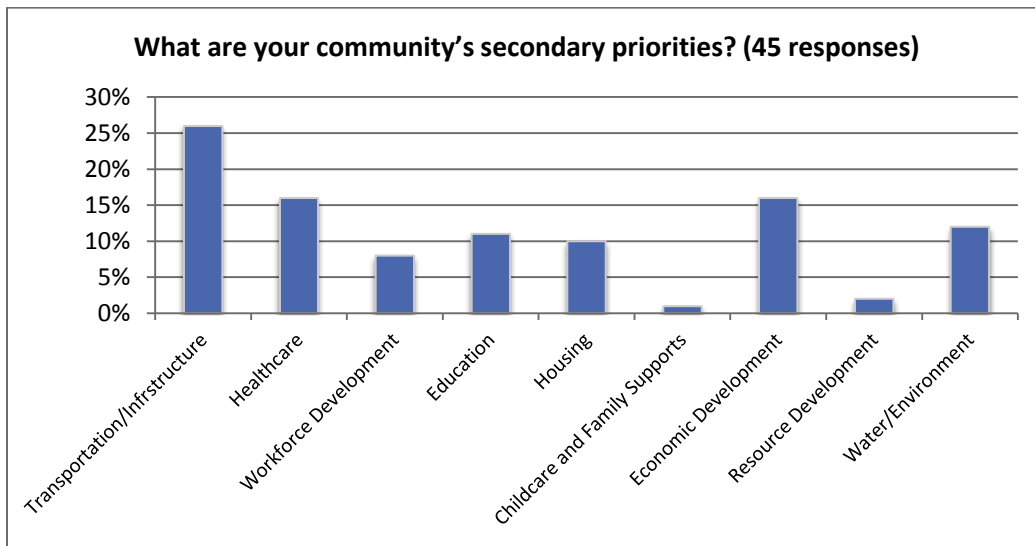
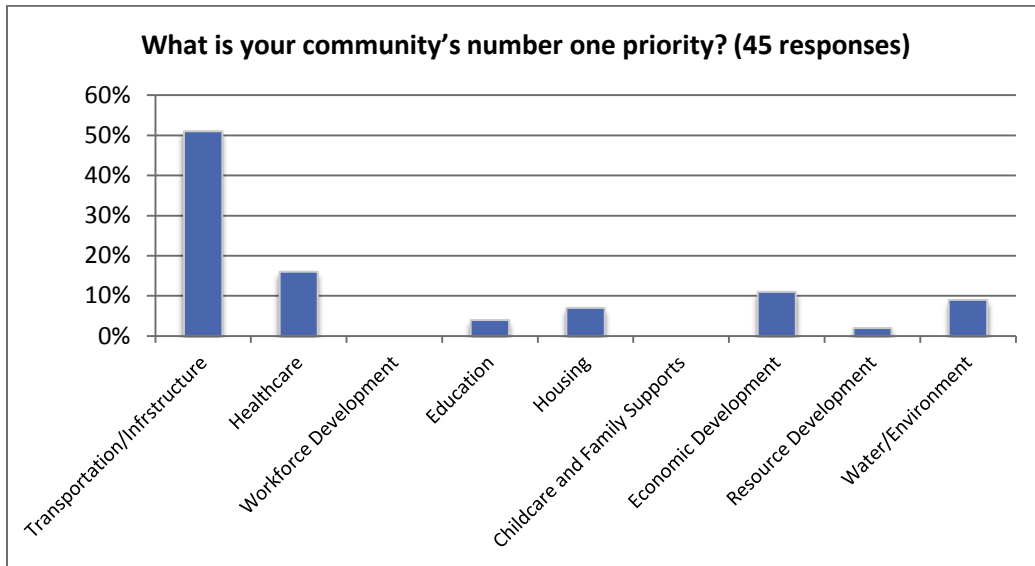
Another recurring theme was the difficulty that communities face when communicating with AHS. Communities are initiating conversations with AHS with little or no return communication or resolution to their health concerns. This issue was voiced by delegates from across the north.

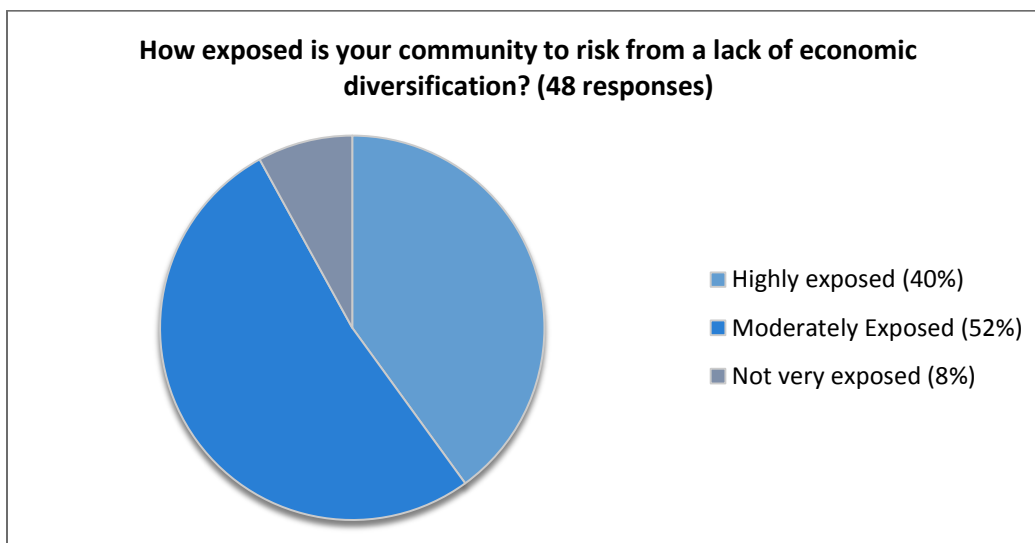
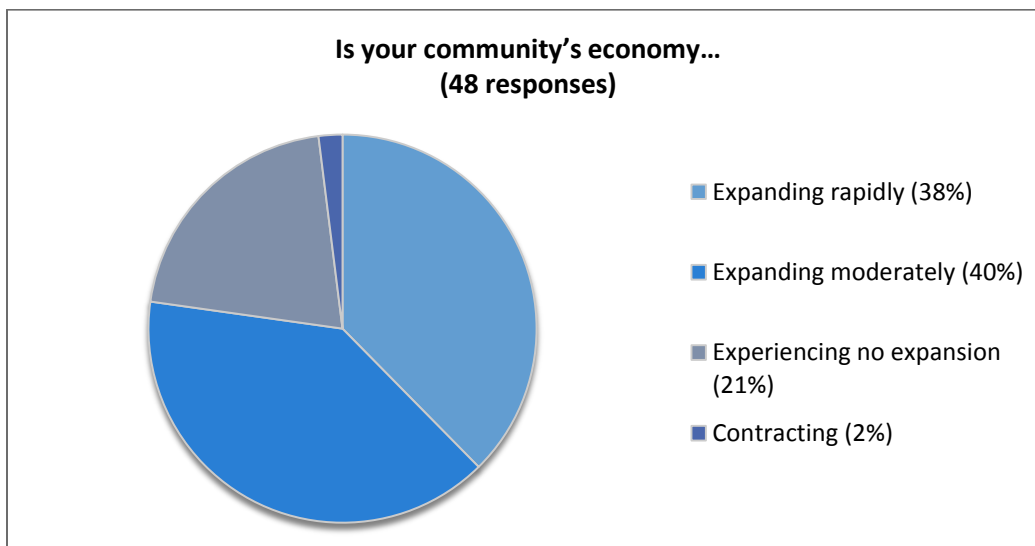
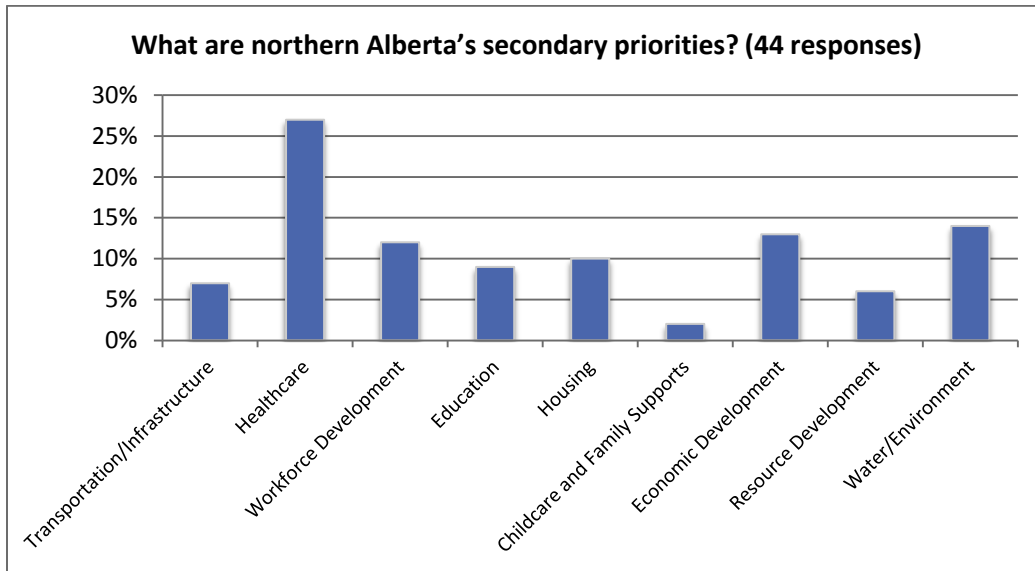
Minister Horne urged delegates to meet further and discuss northern health issues, and improve the government's awareness of their unique issues. He also looked to the NADC to work with community leaders to host a Northern Health Summit.

Results from Instant Polling Presentation

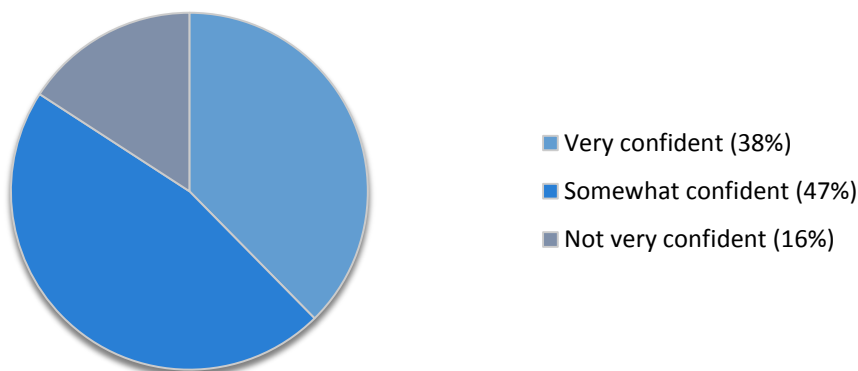
To gather data on northern priorities, community leaders were asked a series of questions about priority setting and current community status. Through a presentation using instant polling technology, delegates were able to answer questions, the results of which were shared in real time with the audience. The following figures present the questions and responses.



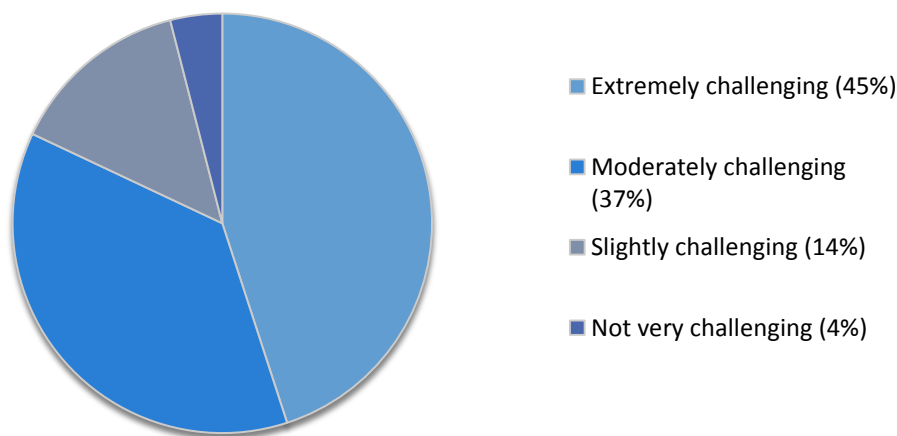




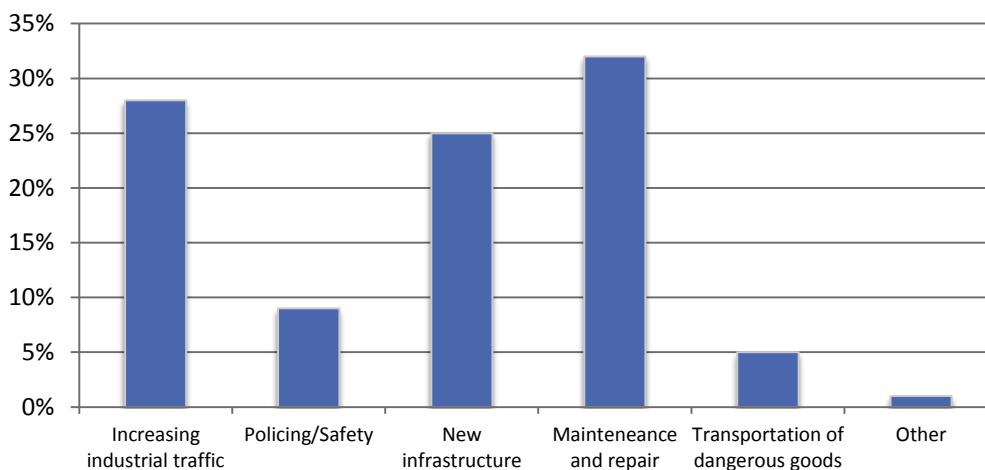
How confident are you in your community's ability to assess near and long-term needs? (45 responses)

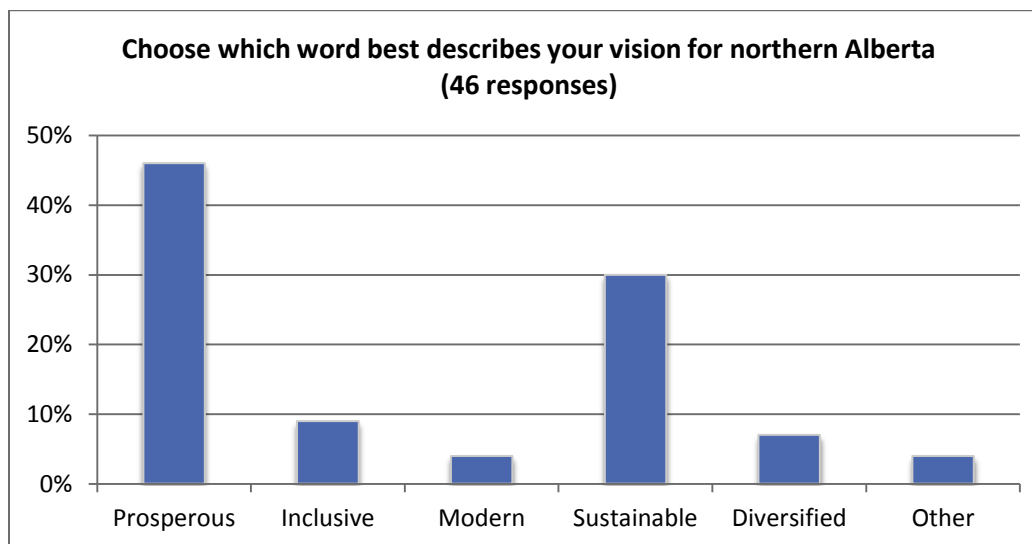
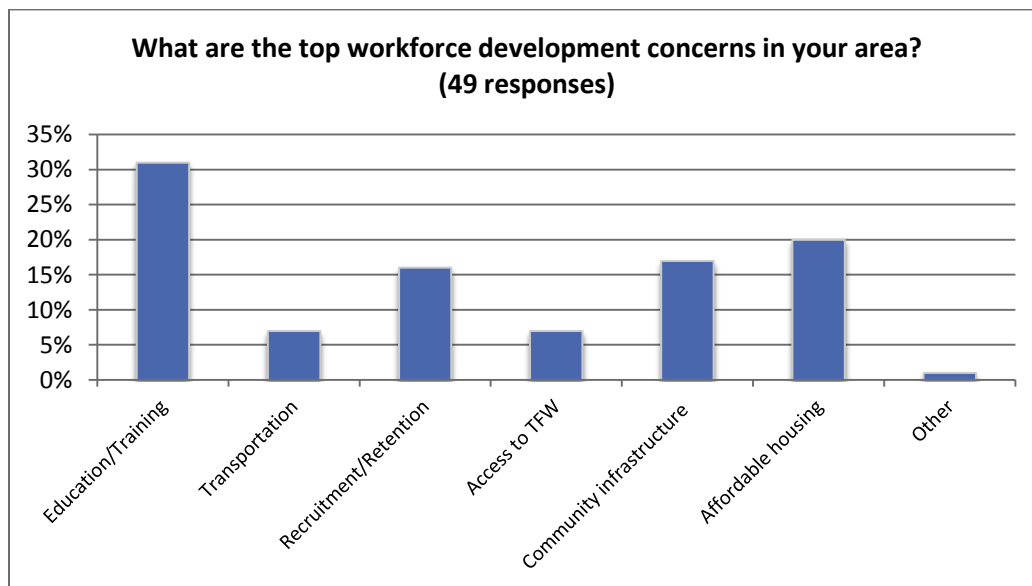
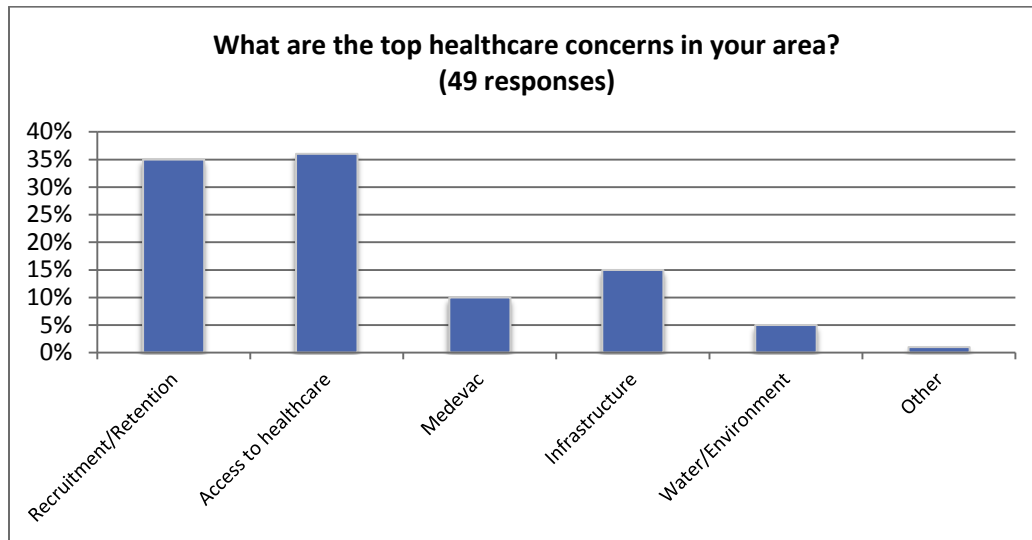


How challenging is it for your community to manage industrial development? (49 responses)



What are the top road transportation concerns in your area? (49 responses)

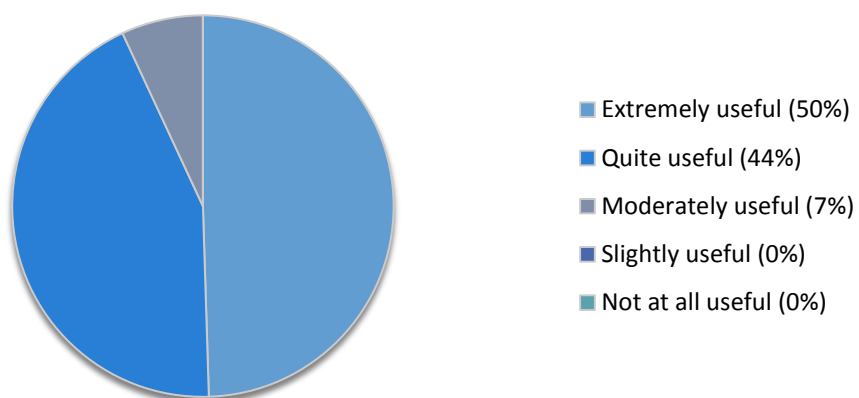




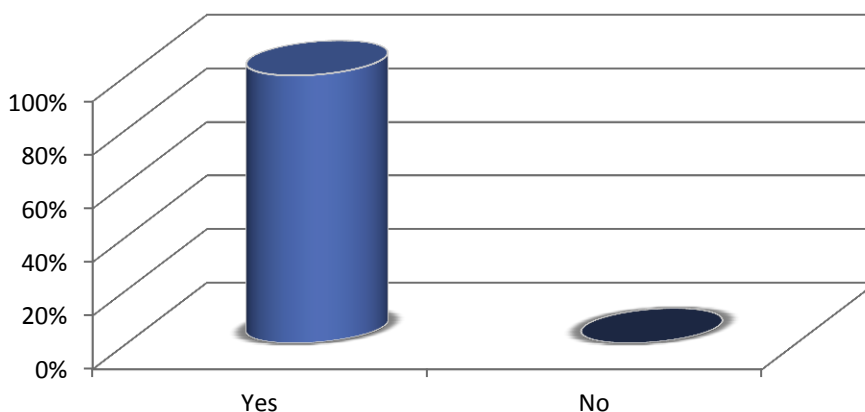
Did the Northern Leaders' Summit meet your expectations?
(44 responses)



How useful did you find the concurrent sessions today?
(46 responses)



Is there value in holding a Northern Leaders Summit Annually?
(47 responses)



Conclusion

The main objective of the Northern Leaders' Summit was to engage northern leaders and provide an opportunity for them to share their priorities with the Alberta government. In addition to priorities, ministers heard about unique circumstances in northern Alberta that set the region apart, as well as the rapid growth of development coupled with increasing pressures on infrastructure.

The data and insights shared in this report reflect the conversations and thoughts of delegates, and this information will be the basis for future strategic planning and action by the NADC.

The priorities identified at the summit will support the NADC in building a stronger Alberta through a stronger North, to the benefit of all Albertans.

