

Message from the Chair

The Northern Alberta Development Council is pleased to present its Annual Report for 2000-2001. The past year has been an exciting one for northern Alberta. The socio-economic development of the North continues to make a significant contribution to *The Alberta Advantage*.

The Council focuses its efforts on the realization of opportunities to advance northern development, while addressing barriers that may affect development. During 2000-2001, the Council carried out initiatives in the following areas:

- the promotion of emerging development opportunities, especially value-added ones;
- involvement in initiatives related to various aspects of northern development; and
- increasing northern skill levels as a way to encourage northern participation in the economy.

The Council's success rests with the contributions made by project partners, northern stakeholders, members and staff. By working together we will continue to build a strong northern Alberta, today and in the future.



Guy Boutilier,
MLA, Fort McMurray,
Chair,
Northern Alberta Development Council

Operational Overview

Core Business

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 has nine 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. One hundred per cent of Alberta's oil sands production is in the North and 90 per cent of its forests. Northern Alberta also accounts for almost 40 per cent of the province's current conventional oil and gas development activity and has about 20 per cent of its agricultural land.

Only about 250,000 people, or less than 10 per cent of Alberta's population, live in the North. 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 the opportunities presented by these investments.

Council Members

Council membership reflects the geographic, cultural, and vocational diversity of northern communities. In 2000-2001 the Council was chaired by Fort McMurray MLA, Guy Boutilier. Private council members were:

- Art Avery, Fort McMurray
- Sandra Cardinal, Kikino
- Doris Courtoreille, Kinuso
- Berkley Ferguson, Athabasca
- Ernie Isley, Cold Lake
- Gerald McIvor, Whitecourt
- Pete Merlo, Grande Prairie
- Michael Procter, Peace River
- Al Toews, Fort Vermilion

Northern Development's Business Plan

The NADC's mission is to advance northern Alberta's tremendous potential for growth through regional initiatives, in partnership with the private sector and community-based organizations. In 2000-2001, the NADC focussed on three goals:

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

Discussion of Goals, Performance and Results

Goal 1

To receive input into priority northern development opportunities and issues.

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) consults with northerners and conducts initial investigation of issues and opportunities with northern stakeholders and government departments.

NADC members and staff consult with stakeholders all over the North through a formal consultation framework, community visits and regional tours.

Leaders' roundtables

The NADC held four Leaders' Roundtable Meetings during the past year in Valleyview, Fairview, Cold Lake, and Lac La Biche. The meetings provided an excellent forum for consulting with key northern Alberta leaders to identify opportunities and address barriers to development, such as transportation costs and distance.

Community tours

Throughout the year, the NADC members, and staff visited communities in the Grande Prairie, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, and Wood Buffalo areas. The meetings were organized to consult with private and public organizations, which have an interest in northern development.

The NADC's Calgary business reception

In November 2000, the NADC Chair, Guy Boutilier, and members hosted a business reception in Calgary to raise the profile of northern development and the Council among key southern Alberta business and government leaders. Premier Ralph Klein attended and spoke at the business reception.

Performance Measure

Effective Community Consultation

The NADC held Leaders' Roundtables with community, business, and government leaders in Valleyview, Fairview, Cold Lake, and Lac La Biche. They also hosted four workshops that focused on specific issues in northern Alberta; two on airports and aviation in Cold Lake and Peace River, and two on electric power development in Athabasca and Peace River. At the conclusion of each meeting, participants were asked whether the NADC's consultation process was an effective way of providing input. A total of 232 participants were asked to submit evaluations and 165 were received.

At the Lac La Biche and Cold Lake meetings, participants were asked to respond to the question on a 10 point scale. The average response was 8 out of 10. At all other meetings, participants responded with either a "yes," "no," or "moderate" response. Of those who completed the survey, 96 percent responded yes. The performance target was 90 percent.

Goal 2

To promote opportunities and address barriers to northern development.

The NADC works with other jurisdictions, as well as within the region, to address barriers to economic growth. It carries out research and initiates strategies to promote emerging development opportunities.

Interjurisdictional initiatives

The first meeting of the co-chairs for the Alberta-Northwest Territories Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation and Development was held in September 2000 in Edmonton. The meeting provided an opportunity for the respective jurisdictions to discuss subjects of mutual interest. In cooperation with the Government of the Northwest Territories, the NADC is preparing an action plan aimed at the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding.

The NADC continued to act as an advisor to the Board of Directors for the Northwest Corridor Development Corporation, a non-profit organization comprised of shippers, carriers, facility operators, labour and government. During the year, the Council reviewed the corporation's capability report, planned the annual conference and general meeting of the corporation (held in Alberta for the first time), contributed to the review of various proposals and provided assistance with the preparation of a business plan for the corporation.

The NADC is a member of a working group developing terms of reference for a proposed Northern Development Ministers' Council, which will provide a forum for the discussion of northern issues by the northern development ministers from provincial and territorial jurisdictions across Canada. The NADC acts as the Government of Alberta's Secretariat for the Council.

Transportation and infrastructure

The NADC has been active in addressing transportation issues and opportunities of significance to northern Alberta. Rail and highway infrastructure is important, as the bulk of the region's commodities are exported. The NADC has focussed on gathering and sharing information about production, profiling northern concerns and opportunities, and building relationships. Partners have included municipalities, large industry, agricultural producers, and departments from Alberta, British Columbia and Northwest Territories.

The NADC is working with the Northwest Corridor Development Corporation to develop a long-term strategic plan to improve the handling and transportation of commodities, remove unnecessary regulation and other impediments, deal with transportation implications of increasing value-added production and improve transportation education, training and information.

A study commissioned by the NADC reviewed trends in aviation and airports in northern Alberta and recommended steps to ensure the continued viability of this important aspect of the economic and social fabric of northern communities. It is anticipated that aviation and airport issues will continue to be a northern priority.

The NADC is assisting northern industry and municipalities to increase the profile and importance of several key northern highways. This includes upgrading of existing roads, as well as construction of new roads, particularly highways that support the Northwestern Canadian Integrated Road Network concept approved by western ministers responsible for northern development.

The NADC is very concerned about the fragmentation of ownership of northern railway lines, railway line abandonment and competition issues. It is participating in an interdepartmental committee that has prepared an Alberta position paper regarding the Canadian Transportation Act, which is under review. The NADC is working with northern municipalities to address these issues.

Northern Alberta recycling initiative

The NADC continued to work with private and public interests to advance recycling opportunities in northern Alberta, especially those that will advance northern economic development. It works with an organization known as the

Northern Coordinated Action For Recycling Enterprises. During the past year, the NADC assisted the group in planning the first Northern Alberta Recycling Workshop, providing management of various initiatives and by acting as liaison with the provincial government.

Aboriginal employment and contract opportunities seminars

Two opportunity seminars were held during the past year, one in Slave Lake and the other in Bonnyville. Each one-day seminar brought together representatives from industry, government and community organizations to describe opportunities in the Lesser Slave Lake and Bonnyville regions. The seminars were primarily for the Native and Metis population in the region, but everyone was welcome. Speakers working in the agriculture, forestry, oil and gas and tourism sectors provided delegates with an overview of their industries and identified new or unrealized opportunities in their fields. Government organizations presented information on programs and services they offer in the region.

Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA)

The NADC completed two projects funded through the Western Economic Partnership Agreement between Alberta and the federal department of Western Economic Diversification. Funding was provided to Alberta North, a partnership of six northern post-secondary institutions, to assist it in expanding from 24 to 40 off-main-campus sites. Funding was used to purchase equipment and resources to support distance education. These sites are electronically connected to the northern post-secondary institutions and to each other, enabling students to access courses and library services from their communities.

The other project involved research into bison management and meat processing. Funds facilitated a partnership between producers, and federal and provincial departments to develop a bison research facility at the federal agricultural research site in Fort Vermilion.

Tourism industry development

The NADC continued to provide support to the northern tourism industry through ex-officio board participation with the Alberta North tourism destination region. It serves in an advisory role with Alberta North and uses that organization's close relationships with northern tourism operators and organizations to guide its own participation in northern tourism development. The NADC continues to support and work to improve northern and rural tourism development initiatives.

The NADC's follow-up work, such as research and coordination of events, is focused in the priority areas of product development; industry training and encouraging coordinated support for service delivery to the northern tourism industry. In 2000-2001 NADC members attended educational tourism events

and worked to plan regional northern educational workshops to be carried out in the fall of 2001.

Assessment, promotion and awareness of value-added agriculture opportunities in the Peace region

The NADC continued 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 project will raise awareness of the Peace region's comparative advantages, and the benefits and opportunities available to the region through a value-added approach by regional entrepreneurs, investors and communities. Goals include developing a stronger agriculture industry in the region, providing direction to commodity-based organizations and entrepreneurs developing value-added opportunities, and improving 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.

This year, the Peace Value-Added Strategy group and its project partners commissioned a needs assessment study entitled Needs Assessment of Peace Country Agriculture Value-Added Entrepreneurs. The group secured \$60,000 from the Canadian Agricultural Rural Communities Initiatives Fund in November of 2000 to fund the analysis. This project, to be completed in the summer of 2001, will provide insight into the competitive advantages of the Peace River region in developing value-added agricultural opportunities.

Intensive Livestock Operation Attraction Study

The NADC is interested in the development of intensive livestock industries as a way to enhance and/or add value to northern Alberta's agricultural sector and advance the northern economy. With the recent challenges facing the industry in central and southern Alberta, investors may be looking to northern Alberta for development opportunities of this kind. In response, the NADC has funded a study to:

- identify potential and viable opportunities for intensive livestock operations in northern Alberta and possible investors;
- identify potential barriers to local decision-making, obstacles in land use planning and issues relating to public acceptance of intensive livestock operations in northern Alberta; and,
- determine a strategy that can be implemented to attract investment in the development of intensive livestock operations in northern Alberta.

A final report will be completed by June 2001.

Enhancing water access in northern Alberta

With assistance from a consultant, the NADC looked at the economic impacts, particularly on northern tourism, of developing marinas, boat launches and wharfs. The research provided a basis for proposals to enhance water access facilities in northern Alberta. A draft study has been prepared and is currently under review by NADC members and staff.

Non-energy mineral study and seminar

Non-energy mineral exploration has increased over the past two years, especially in the North, but investment in these resources is well below its potential. There are a number of opportunities and challenges that will come with increased mineral exploration and development. The NADC, in partnership with the federal department of Western Economic Diversification and the provincial department of Resource Development, commissioned a review of the impacts of, and the potential for, northern participation in the exploration and development of future non-energy mines in northern Alberta.

Key issues and/or concerns raised by northern communities include lack of information about opportunities, a desire to maximize northern benefits, and the need to identify and address barriers to development, clarify manpower requirements and qualifications for employment, and take advantage of education and training opportunities. The report recommends the formation of a mineral and land-use initiative for northern Alberta, training initiatives, prospecting assistance grants, mineral exploration incentive programs, mineral potential maps for northern Alberta, enhanced communication with northern communities, mineral-related education in the public school system, and web-based community and subcontractor information.

Education and training opportunities are vital to the growth and awareness of the industry and therefore a review was conducted to investigate the education and training opportunities and barriers within the industry and how northern communities, particularly Aboriginal communities, might increase participation in the development of this sector.

These reports were presented at a seminar attended by 55 participants representing the non-energy mineral industry, government, communities, and post-secondary institutions. Participants discussed the consultant's findings and recommended that the Alberta government facilitate regional information sessions to bring together different stakeholders to discuss non-energy mineral issues, that post-secondary institutions place greater emphasis on developing training programs to address the gaps related to non-energy mineral development, and that more research be directed toward this emerging sector.

Electric power workshops in northern Alberta

In response to concerns about the future of the electricity industry, the NADC held two information workshops in northern Alberta. The department of Resource Development collaborated with the NADC to present workshops on electricity supply, price, markets, new opportunities, and customer choice options.

The workshops provided information about restructuring of the electricity industry, raised awareness of opportunities of interest to business and communities, and shared information about unique power supply projects.

More than one hundred representatives from Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, business, local government, the resource industries, including oil, gas and forestry firms, and public institutions attended events at Athabasca and Peace River to learn about the new electric power marketplace.

Northern Alberta Human Resources Management Conference

A diverse group of employers from the Peace region came together to host a conference on human resource issues specific to northern Alberta. The NADC assisted in planning and hosting this conference, and Alberta Human Resources and Employment was a major sponsor. The conference was attended by close to 150 northern employers and human resource managers from across northern Alberta and offered participants from different economic sectors the opportunity to meet, learn about topics of interest to them, and identify issues and develop solutions.

Professional workforce scan

As part of its bursary selection process, the NADC gathers information from a sampling of northern employers across all economic sectors. For the 2001 scan, 112 employers were contacted. The workforce scan helps to identify occupations that are in high demand or hard to recruit for in northern Alberta.

Performance Measure

Promoting Northern Development

The NADC undertakes projects and initiatives aimed at promoting northern development opportunities. It also addresses barriers that may hinder northern development.

Results: A random telephone survey of 113 of 152 identified project partners was conducted by an independent consultant. Of those respondents who expressed an opinion, 99 percent indicated they believed that the NADC's project work

Northern Alberta Development Council

promoted an opportunity or addressed a barrier to northern development. The performance target was 90 percent. Results are reliable to within +/-5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval.

Performance Measure	1998/1999 Actual	1999/2000 Actual	2000/2001 Target	2000/2001 Actual
Percentage of project partners who believe the NADC's project work promoted an opportunity or addressed a barrier to northern development	89%	91%	90%	99%

Goal 3

To increase northern skill levels.

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

Northern LINKS

Northern LINKS is a program intended to ease the transition for northern Alberta students completing high school and attending a post-secondary institution. It is geared to 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 NADC region. Northern LINKS provides funding for a variety of projects from \$500 to \$50,000. In the 2000-2001 fiscal year, 40 projects were funded totalling over \$430,000. The students involved in Northern LINKS projects are requested to send in evaluations. A summary of the survey results is presented under the Performance Measure section.

Northern Alberta access to a social work degree program

A group of northern employers, community representatives and post-secondary institutions came together as the Northern BSW (Bachelor of Social Work) Council of Stakeholders to resolve a longstanding shortage of qualified social workers in northern communities. In collaboration with stakeholders from southern Alberta, the Northern BSW Council of Stakeholders successfully worked towards offering a University of Calgary social work degree program with content tailored to northern rural and Aboriginal communities. The Access BSW is now offered in seven Alberta communities, including four in the North, and has nearly doubled the provincial enrolments in baccalaureate social work

education. The NADC provided organizational support to the stakeholders' council.

Northern Student Supplement

The Northern Student Supplement, a joint initiative between the NADC and Alberta Learning, is a bursary for first- and second-year northern post-secondary students in financial need. It supplements the province-wide Alberta Opportunities Bursary. This was the third year that the supplement was available. Six hundred and sixty three students received the award, for a total of \$765,500.

Northern Alberta Development Council Bursary

The NADC Bursary is a \$3,000 return service bursary (\$1,500 for a half year of study). In the 2000-2001, 117 Alberta students were awarded the bursary. This year greater emphasis was placed on health and education fields. Bursaries were given to students in various occupational categories.

<u>Occupational categories</u>	<u>Number of bursaries</u>
Health Care/Nursing	31
Education	29
Engineering/Technical	16
Social Services	14
Natural Sciences/Environment	12
Business/Administration/Law	11
<u>Humanities/Applied Arts</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	117

Bursary Partnerships Program

Through Bursary Partnerships, the NADC co-sponsors bursaries for post-secondary students in partnership with industry, small businesses and community organizations. Thirty-eight sponsors contributed over \$135,000 and sponsored 132 bursaries. The total value of the bursaries is close to \$275,000.

<u>Type of sponsor</u>	<u>Number of bursaries</u>
Business/industry	51
Community/other organization	75
<u>School divisions/colleges</u>	<u>6</u>
Total	132

The Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

The Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse project is a joint initiative between the NADC and five northern Alberta colleges: Fairview College, Grande Prairie Regional College, Keyano College, Lakeland College and Northern Lakes College. The clearinghouse was initiated in 1995 to provide the colleges with labour force, economic and demographic information to help identify new training programs, or to modify or cancel existing ones. Research carried out by the clearinghouse covers various areas of industry, specific occupations, training opportunities, demographic trends, and community needs. The project also serves as a forum for further communication and cooperation between the partner institutions.

In 2000-2001, clearinghouse activities involved the research for 11 reports that covered a wide range labour force and training issues, as well as the coordination of a meeting between the clearinghouse partners and representatives from the pulp and paper industry and oil sands development.

Apprenticeship Pilot Project

As a way to enhance northern skill development, the NADC members have been working on a pilot project that, if implemented, will create an awareness of apprenticeship training opportunities among students in lower grades, and so provide opportunities for youth to obtain necessary apprenticeship accreditation at an earlier age. The intent is to address the shortage of skilled trades persons in northern Alberta.

Performance Measure

Enhance Skill Development for Students in Northern Alberta

The NADC coordinates a number of programs and projects aimed at encouraging skill development for students in northern Alberta. Programs enhance students' financial capacity for post-secondary education, encourage return service to northern Alberta, and provide funding for northern education options.

Results: 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 rate of NADC bursary recipients who have fulfilled or are in the process of fulfilling return service obligations is 77.61 percent. The target was 75 percent.

NADC Bursary Return Service Rate

Reporting Year	Return of Service Target	Return Service Rate	Years Used In Calculation
1995/1996	no formal target	71%	93, 94, 95
1996/1997	72%	72%	94, 95, 96
1997/1998	74%	77%	95, 96, 97
1998/1999	75%	76%	96, 97, 98
1999/2000	75%	74%	97, 98, 99
<u>2000/2001</u>	<u>75%</u>	<u>78%</u>	<u>98, 99, 00</u>

(Source: NADC Bursaries database)

The target for the Bursary Partnership Program was to confirm \$125,000 in matching funding from partners. The actual amount committed was \$135,700.

Reporting Year	Partner Contribution Target	Number of Bursaries	Partner Contribution Received	BPP Portion
1995/1996	no formal target	80	\$93,000	\$73,600
1996/1997	\$110,000	83	\$105,200	\$86,805
1997/1998	\$130,000	113	\$122,050	\$100,050
1998/1999	\$150,000	116	\$122,636	
	\$106,430			
1999/2000	\$120,000*	129	\$125,950	
	\$120,450			
<u>2000/2001</u>	<u>\$125,000</u>	<u>132</u>	<u>\$135,700</u>	
	<u>\$136,450</u>			

*Target adjusted based on actual trends in sponsor contributions

(Source: NADC bursaries database)

The Northern LINKS Program performance measure was the percentage of students expecting to pursue post-secondary/trades education, who indicate their participation in the Northern LINKS Project will ease their transition and encourage program completion.

367 students responded to this question on a 10-point scale. Of those who provided a rating, 314 indicated they planned to pursue post-secondary education. The average rating given by those who responded and planned on pursuing post-secondary education was 7.7 out of 10. The target for this year was

85 percent. The NADC plans to review the current survey to determine if the questions need clarification.

(Source: Northern LINKS database)