

Northern Alberta Development Council

2020-2021 Annual Report



Photo: Lesser Slave Lake

October 2021
Jobs, Economy and Innovation



Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) 2020-2021 Annual Report
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Message from the Chair

As Chair of the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC), I am pleased to share the 2020-21 Annual Report highlighting the past year, covering April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. For almost six decades, the NADC has been providing advice to the government on northern challenges and opportunities through collaborative partnerships, research and regional engagements.

Over the past year, the pandemic has presented numerous challenges to the north's economy. This, coupled with fluctuating oil prices, has forced northern communities to adapt and evolve quickly. Our council has continued to focus on communicating and engaging with stakeholders and collecting information that supports advancing initiatives to strengthen the local workforce, identify critical infrastructure, and lay the groundwork for economic recovery, job creation and future growth in the north.

Commissioned by the NADC, the 2020 Northern Workforce Survey provided valuable information on in-demand and difficult-to-recruit occupations as well as recruitment and retention challenges in Alberta's north. Through our participation with the Labour Education Applied Research North (LEARN), a research project examining micro-credentialing prospects in Alberta's north was commissioned and the report identified a need to streamline micro-credentialing by developing standard definitions, outcomes, assessments, and quality assurance processes. Our foundational governance supports to the Water North Coalition and Northern Alberta Elected Leaders (NAEL) helped these groups obtain information on advising the needs of the north to government.

Over the next year, we will be working on the development of a northern strategy for Alberta that focuses on advancing the development of one or more multi-modal corridors across the north, which would include broadband, utilities, roadways, and rail.

I look forward to working with our members and stakeholders and advising the government on strategies that will build a strong Alberta through a strong north.



David Hanson, MLA
Chair, NADC

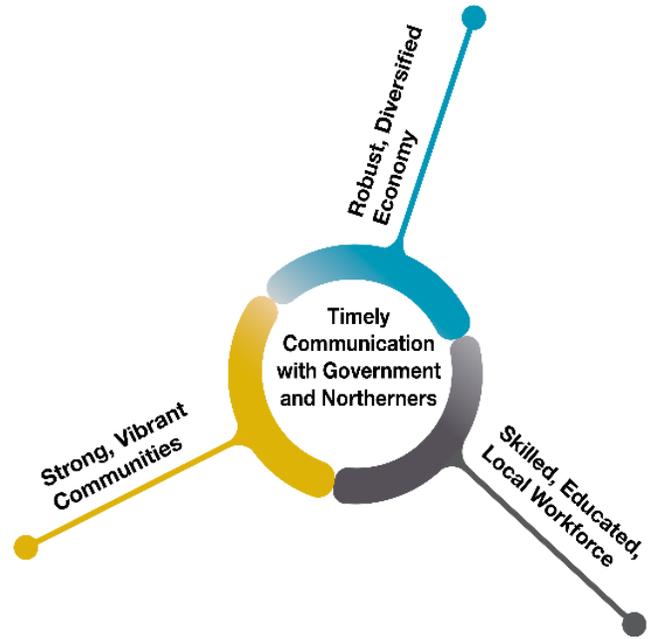
Meet the Council

Chair		Vice Chair
 <p>David Hanson, MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul Appointed on November 18, 2020</p>	 <p>Tracy Allard, MLA for Grande Prairie Term: November 5, 2019 – November 18, 2020</p>	 <p>Ken Noskey Term: April 1, 2012 - March 31, 2021</p>
Members		
 <p>Jason Schulz Appointed on Sep 14, 2020</p>	 <p>Cody Beairsto Appointed on Sep 14, 2020</p>	 <p>Peter Cardinal Appointed on Sep 14, 2020</p>
 <p>Omer Moghrabi Appointed on July 8, 2020</p>	 <p>Jeannette Danks Term: September 14, 2017 – September 13, 2020</p>	 <p>Loretta Coates Term: September 14, 2020 – February 1, 2021</p>

Mandate

The mandate of the council, as outlined 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 council may investigate the requirements of residents in northern Alberta and make recommendations with respect to:

- social and economic development,
- development of communities and service delivery, and
- development of government services and programs.



Vision, Mission, Key Strategies

Vision



A stronger Alberta through a stronger north.

Mission



To identify and implement sustainable measures that will advance northern development, and to advise government on opportunities and issues for the benefit of Albertans.

Core Approaches

Communication



Engagement



Research, Initiatives and Partnership



Advise Government



Key Strategies

Build partnerships among key stakeholders to establish priorities and pursue northern opportunities.



Foster economic strength and diversity by supporting development in transportation, value-added agriculture, tourism, health, and other areas.



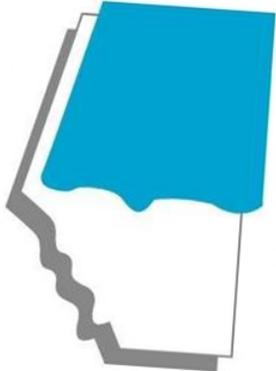
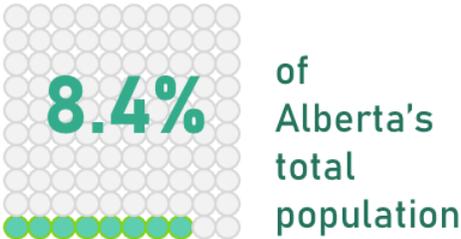
Support initiatives to increase northern skill levels, in partnership with northern communities, business, industry, learning providers and students.



Increase awareness about northern Alberta's employment and lifestyle opportunities.



THE NADC REGION



First Nations



Métis Settlements



Treaty Areas 6, 8, and 10



Results and Contributions

The NADC is accountable to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation (JEI) and responsible for providing advice and guidance regarding northern development.

JEI staff provide NADC with secretariat services to support the council's vision, mission, goals and strategies. The following topics include the council's activities and performance in 2020-21.

Northern Strategy

The NADC has confirmed its plan to develop a Northern Strategy for Alberta. The development of the strategy is identified in Government's Response to the Fair Deal Panel (recommendation 5). The response identified that the NADC will continue to focus on the development of one or more multi-modal corridors across the north, which would include broadband, utilities, roadways, and rail and the northern strategy will further develop the corridor concepts and complement the work of other provincial and territorial members of the Northern Minister's Development Forum.

Over the last year, the council engaged with key stakeholders to understand their priorities to help inform NADC as it initiated the plan to develop the Northern Strategy. The council also met with leaders and experts advancing transportation and multimodal corridors, including the Economic Corridor Taskforce led by Shane Getson, MLA for Lac Ste. Anne Parkland.

NADC Bursary Programs

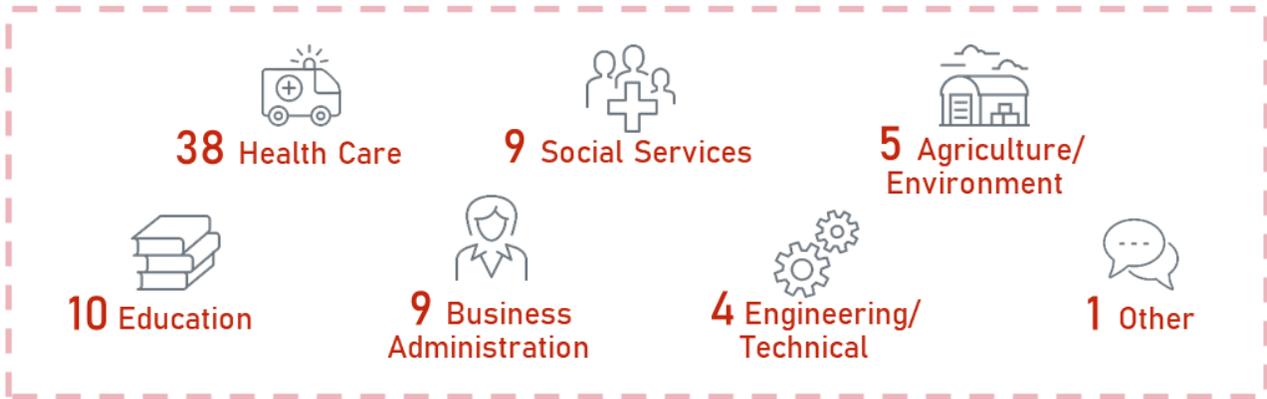
NADC bursaries help to attract and retain the skilled professionals in demand by businesses and communities. The program maintains a high return-service rate of **79 per cent**. Demand for the bursary program continues to exceed available funding.

In collaboration with the Alberta Student Aid office of Alberta Advanced Education and/or Alberta Education, the NADC offered 227 return-service bursaries to Alberta students in the 2020-2021 academic year. This number includes the NADC Bursaries, the higher dollar valued specialty bursaries, the Bursary Partnerships, the First Nation (status or non-status) Métis and Inuit Bursary, and the Northern Student Teacher Bursary, which is offered in collaboration with Alberta Education. Details on NADC bursaries can be found at nadc.ca.

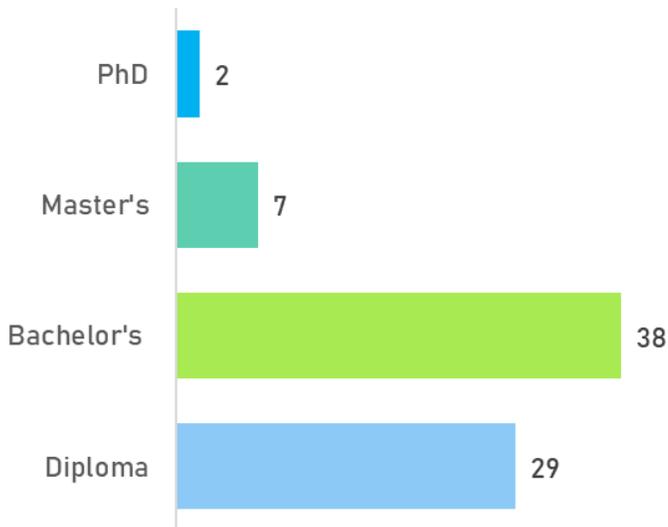
Work was started to replace the existing online application portal for NADC's bursary programs with a new updated program. This will improve the application processes, streamline the workflow and provide a better user experience. The newly created government platform BERNIE will host the Bursary Online Application (BOA) for the NADC bursary programs and will launch in 2021-22.



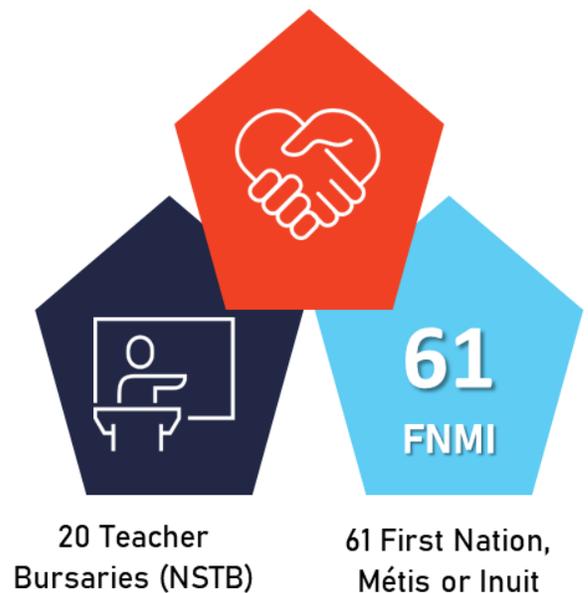
BURSARY PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Educational Levels



57 Bursary Partnerships



NADC Bursary

The NADC Bursary focuses on students training in professions determined to be in demand by northern employers. In the 2020-2021 academic year, 285 Alberta students applied and 89 received a bursary. The NADC bursary provided 76 bursaries of \$3,000 or \$6,000 each. The other 13 bursaries were a specialty bursary.

Higher Dollar Valued NADC Bursaries for Specialty Programs

Certain programs in demand received higher bursary values. Thirteen students received NADC Specialty Bursaries:



6 Medical and Dentistry Bursaries – 4 in Medicine and 2 in Dentistry – with an amount of \$12,000



2 Nurse Practitioner Bursaries with an amount of \$9,000



3 Pharmacy Bursaries with an amount of \$6,000



2 Veterinarian Bursaries with an amount of \$6,000

NADC Bursary Partnerships

Bursary Partnerships are an excellent opportunity for businesses and community organizations to bring in the skilled professionals that fit their organization. In the program, sponsors provide the students they select between \$1,000 and \$3,000, and then apply to the NADC for matching bursary funds. Specialty bursaries allow for higher matching funds ranging from \$6,000 to \$12,000. Recipients are obligated to provide return service within the NADC region, based on one month of full-time employment for every \$500 of total bursary support received to a maximum of 12 months return service per year.

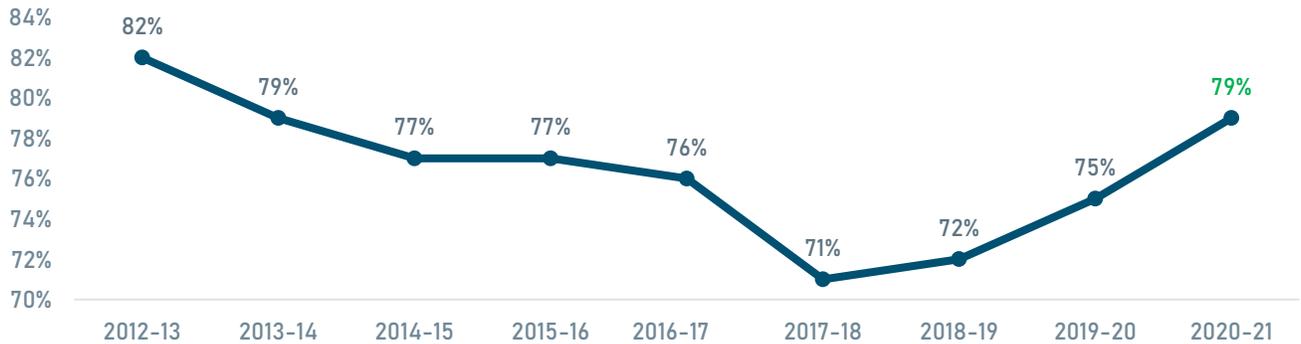
In the 2020-2021 academic year, the Bursary Partnership Program awarded a total of \$197,650, with \$98,200 provided through the NADC to 57 students. Included in this year's ongoing sponsors was one employer that matched funds of \$12,000 for a dentistry student. New sponsorships are accepted on an ongoing basis; and potential sponsors can contact the NADC.



NADC Bursary Return-Service Rate

Recipients of the NADC Bursary enter into an agreement to live and work in northern Alberta when they complete their education - one year of full-time work for each year of bursary support. The NADC follows up with each recipient student who do not fulfill their return-service obligations, as they are required to repay the funding amount received from the NADC. In 2020-21, 79 per cent of bursary recipients returned to the north, the highest rate since 2013-14 (79 per cent).

Bursary Return-Service Rate



First Nation (Status or Non-Status), Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Bursary

This bursary was launched on October 29, 2015 to assist meeting the needs of Indigenous learners. Funding for the program is provided by Alberta Student Aid. In 2020-21, 61 students were awarded this bursary.

Northern Student Teacher Bursary

Teacher attraction and retention in northern, rural and remote Alberta locations is a significant workforce challenge. Population projections for school-age children as well as teacher retirements show that the demand for teachers will only grow.

Alberta Education collaborates with the NADC to offer the Northern Student Teacher Bursary (NSTB), which requires a return-service obligation from recipients. Twenty recipients received this award in 2020-21.



Northern Health Care Practicum Funding

The NADC partnered with Alberta Health Services for the Health Care Practicum Funding. The program helped support 30 recipients towards completing a practicum placement within NADC boundaries.

Labour Education Applied Research North (LEARN)

In 2020-21, NADC continued its collaboration in the LEARN partnership as a member, with JEI staff providing secretariat, key administrative and research supports. Currently, this partnership consists of the NADC and five northern post-secondary institutions, Grande Prairie Regional College, Keyano College, Northern Lakes College, Portage College, and Athabasca University.

The key goal of the partnership is to address northern workforce development by facilitating information sharing, identifying workforce trends, and conducting research to inform the modification or creation of new programs to address the region's skills gap.



Last year, LEARN commissioned a research project, *Micro-credentialing in northern Alberta*, with a goal of better understanding micro-credentials and how these short and focused training opportunities can support the north's skills gaps. The study provided a high-level exploration of some of the emerging themes, policies and strategies around micro-credentials. Key findings suggested:

- a need for a commonly accepted definition of micro-credentials in the post-secondary sector;
- an existing lack of familiarity with micro-credentials among employers and industry; and
- a need to develop standard outcomes, assessments, and quality assurance processes for micro-credentials to ladder with traditional credentials.

Based on these findings, NADC advised the government that it should consider implementing initiatives that streamline micro-credentials, increase skill levels and match industry needs in the north.



Northern Alberta Elected Leaders (NAEL)

The NADC continued to maintain its crucial relationship with northern elected leaders through NAEL, a consortium of 40 northwestern Alberta municipalities. NAEL is a key forum for identifying and discussing issues impacting municipal development in Alberta's northwest.

Coordinated through NADC's secretariat support, NAEL members met virtually four times in 2020-21 to collaborate on regional issues and provide information to support the decisions of their orders of government. Industry, community partners, and government officials presented to NAEL on a variety of key topics and NAEL members provided insights on issues impacting their municipalities. Examples of such topics included COVID-19, municipal funding, emergency services, community services, health services, environment, and agriculture and forestry, etc.

NADC's attendance in the NAEL meetings and engagement with NAEL members continued to enhance NADC's awareness of northern issues and local perspectives.



2020 Northern Workforce Survey

NADC has been conducting workforce surveys since 1995. The recent 2020 survey obtained 636 northern employers' insights on in-demand and difficult-to-recruit occupations, as well as recruitment and retention challenges in Alberta's north.

Key findings of the 2020 Northern Workforce Survey:

- Truck drivers were the most in-demand occupation.
- Most respondents did not experience challenges in recruiting or did not hire new employees in the past year.
- Of those experiencing difficulty in recruiting, the top five challenges were:
 - a low number of applicants;
 - candidates not having the required work experience;
 - the local market not producing enough work-ready/qualified job candidates;
 - job seekers not interested in the jobs available; and
 - competition from other employers.

The NADC used the information from the survey results to advise government about the need to support planning for emerging skills and training needs, developing effective hiring and retention strategies, and building a skilled, educated workforce in Alberta's north. The information also supported the selection of recipients for the NADC bursary programs.



NADC Integrated Map

The Northern Development Integrated Map, managed by the NADC Secretariat, is a web-based mapping platform accessible through the NADC website that provides practical information to enable and develop local and regional joint projects within the NADC region. This map not only provides a visual perspective of themes and statistics, but also allows customized and interactive views. The NADC continues to explore ways to showcase the information and maximize the value of this product for northern communities.

Water North Coalition (WNC)

The NADC continued its collaboration with WNC, with JEI staff providing secretariat support to the WNC by coordinating meetings, and facilitating connections to key government and regional partners to advance the goals identified in the WNC's Strategic Plan. In March 2021, JEI's secretariat support to the WNC discontinued and a WNC leadership committee assumed the roles of management of the administration of the coalition moving forward.

This partnership between northern Alberta municipalities and water/wastewater partners focuses on drawing attention to northern challenges in delivering safe water and wastewater management systems, and enables key partners to work collaboratively to deliver training to water and wastewater operators. The NADC will continue to connect with the WNC to understand northern water and wastewater issues as the council advances its mandate as an advisory agency to government on northern economic and social issues.



NADC Communications

Apart from meetings and roundtables that kept the council informed on issues impacting the north last year, the NADC also continued to use its communication methods through its website and social media accounts to inform, engage, and cultivate relationships with northern stakeholders.

 **NADC Website**
www.nadc.ca

 **NADC Twitter**
[@NADCca](https://twitter.com/NADCca)
700+ followers

 **NADC Facebook**
[@NADCca](https://www.facebook.com/NADCca)
1,100+ followers

Management's Responsibility for Reporting

The NADC is a provincial government agency that investigates northern Alberta's economic and social development priorities, programs, and services and advises the government on supports needed to meet the needs of northern residents.

Section 8 of the *Northern Alberta Development Council Act* stipulates: "The Council shall prepare an annual report of its activities that shall be laid before the Legislative Assembly not later than 15 days after the opening of the session next following the preparation of the report."

