

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) met in Edmonton, AB, April 8, 2009, for its regular administration meeting and annual Northern MLA Breakfast Meeting.

The NADC met with northern MLAs to discuss current issues facing northern communities. Each of the ten Ministers/MLAs in attendance thanked the NADC for their continued support and role as advocates for the north. A number of current challenges and opportunities were highlighted during the discussions:

Employment: The Ministry of Employment and Immigration saw an increase in funds in the current budget. Unemployment could rise to 6.7% in the next year, but roughly 30,000 jobs in the retail sector will remain available.

Forestry: The forestry industry is facing serious challenges. While no turnaround is immediately predicted for the forest industry, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is looking into taxation policies affecting the industry. The NADC is preparing to request a meeting with Hon. Ted Morton, Minister of Sustainable Development to discuss the status of the Forest Industry Sustainability Committee Report.

Transportation: A significant portion of the new infrastructure budget has been earmarked for projects in northern Alberta. The north-south corridor, east-west connector, HWY 63, 881, 88 and 40 continue to be infrastructure priorities for the northern region. The NADC has updated its *Northern Highways Strategy*, which outlines the current priority infrastructure in the north. Council was encouraged by our northern MLAs to continue its work in keeping the Edmonton Municipal Airport open and accessible to the north. Patient health care is a key concern relating to the possible closure of the airport. The Council will continue to support the Commuter

Air Access Network (CAANA) group in their fight to keep the Municipal Airport open.

Energy: Although the oil and gas sector is facing challenges, northern Alberta continues to pursue opportunities in alternative energy. In the northwest, energy and bio energy production have a number of positive projects underway in communities like High Level, Grande Prairie and Whitecourt. These long term projects are good for the communities and for the Province. There is potential in the northwest portion of the region for the development of geo-thermal energy. The Alberta government is undergoing consultation with Albertans in order to formulate a comprehensive stand on nuclear energy.

Health: Northern residents need for better access to health care in their home communities was raised. Access to dialysis, MRI's and other scans were highlighted. Northern MLAs indicated that they would like to see services provided in northern communities so residents do not have to travel to the city to access health care services. Many northern residents are not able to make these long, expensive trips to the city to access care.

Seniors & Community Supports: The Seniors Advisory Council will be touring a number of communities in northern Alberta, June 22-24, 2009. This is an opportunity to profile senior services, as well as make recommendations to the group to pass along to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. For more information, contact Dianne Liard, 780-427-7587 or the Seniors Advisory Committee, 780-422-2521. Praise was given for the 40% increase in stable funding for libraries. Funding for the Municipal Sustainability Initiative will see a funding decrease of \$100M in the 2009-10 budget. Communities will need to work together to maximize the benefit of provincial and federal funding dollars in their area.



The NADC successfully hosted its tri-annual Conference in Cold Lake, AB, April 22-24, 2009. Over 200 delegates attended and brought their regional and organizational perspectives to discussions on the future of the north. Premier Stelmach along with 15 Cabinet Ministers and MLAs attended and discussed issues of importance to the province and the north. A full Proceedings Report, including keynote/session summaries and information provided during the scenario working group discussions will be sent out to all registered delegates in July, 2009 and will also be available to the public on our website at www.nadc.gov.ab.ca.

NADC Updates/ Events

- The NADC welcomes Andre Harpe as a new member to the Council. Mr. Harpe replaces Michael Ouellette from Grande Prairie who served the council for 4 years, an extended term. Best wishes to Mr. Ouellette as he pursues more adventures in the diamond business.
- Marko Babic has joined the NADC team as a Research Officer in the Peace River Office. Mr. Babic brings experience working in political and military affairs.
- Provincial Physician Recruitment and Retention Workshop has been re-scheduled for September 23-24, 2009 in Nisku, AB. To receive information on this workshop, please forward your e-mail address to Rebekah Seidel, Rural Physician Action Plan (rebakah.seidel@rpap.ab.ca).
- The next Northern Elected Leaders Meeting (NAEL) will take place May 22, 2009 at 10:00am at the MD of Northern Lights Office in Manning.

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