

December 14, 2022

Government of Alberta Unveils Economic Development in Rural Alberta Plan

The plan includes five strategic directions intended to support local and provincewide work already underway in enhancing rural economic development in Alberta

The Government of Alberta has unveiled the [Economic Development in Rural Alberta Plan](#) (EDRAP). The EDRAP is the culmination of several initiatives undertaken by the Government of Alberta under the leadership of Minister of Agriculture and Immigration Nate Horner. It includes a series of engagements with rural stakeholders, including RMA, and jurisdictional scanning of rural economic development initiatives across Canada and the world.

The EDRAP includes five strategic directions, each based around a five-year commitment to progress. The strategic initiatives are intended to compliment the economic development work already underway at both the community and provincewide level.

The strategic directions, descriptions, and a cross-section of new actions are:

Strategic Direction 1: Economic development-enabling infrastructure

- ◆ Identify and improve economic development-enabling infrastructure to support investment and growth in rural Alberta
- ◆ New actions:
 - ◇ Ensure all of Alberta has broadband service availability by 2026 and supports are in place to provide digital literacy training.
 - ◇ Build on work to further develop transportation corridors to maximize economic development opportunities.
 - ◇ In 2024, the Municipal Sustainability Initiative will be replaced by the Local Government Fiscal Framework, which will provide permanent, predictable funding for a wide range of infrastructure.

Strategic Direction 2: Rural business supports and entrepreneurship

- ◆ Advance entrepreneurship capacity and a culture of innovation across rural Alberta.
- ◆ New actions:
 - ◇ Establish new targets and update the Alberta Agri-Food Investment and Growth Strategy.
 - ◇ Support rural entrepreneurship training and leadership development in rural Alberta through collaboration with key partners.
 - ◇ Leverage changes to the Rural Utilities Act, enabling rural electrification associations to capitalize on rural economic development opportunities through innovation and business development.

Strategic Direction 3: Support for labour force and skills development

- ◆ Enable skills development in rural communities to enhance workforce capacity today and for the future
- ◆ New actions:
 - ◇ Leverage Alberta's library system to support knowledge transfer and skills development.
 - ◇ Improve awareness of agriculture and agri-food related careers and support to attract and retain workers in rural Alberta

Strategic Direction 4: Marketing and promoting rural tourism

- ◆ Description: Enhance rural Alberta's reputation and capacity as a diverse tourism destination.
- ◆ New actions:
 - ◇ Support Alberta's rural visitor economy to ensure rural and Indigenous communities are strong and vibrant with opportunities for employment and economic diversification.

Strategic Direction 5: Rural economic development capacity building

- ◆ Description: Enhance rural economic development through regional and targeted capacity building.
- ◆ New actions:
 - ◇ Invest Alberta will partner with local economic development agencies to drive increased foreign direct investment to rural Alberta.
 - ◇ Continued collaboration with and investment in Regional Economic Development Alliances.
 - ◇ Work with all partners to further develop capacity building and mentorship programming targeted to rural and Indigenous community needs, and develop a regional policy approach to rural economic development capacity building.
 - ◇ Develop a one-stop Alberta.ca webpage to highlight programming for rural economic development initiatives.

The RMA is in the process of analyzing the EDRAP in detail to determine the how effectively it aligns with rural municipal priorities. The RMA looks forward to working with the Government of Alberta to implement many of the EDRAP's new initiatives, particularly related to strategic direction.

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