

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

Forestry and Parks

Annual Report

2023-24

Alberta 

Forestry and Parks, Government of Alberta | Forestry and Parks Annual Report 2023–2024

©2024 Government of Alberta | Published: June 2024

ISBN 978-1-4601-6084-8

ISSN 2818-4041

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Preface

The Public Accounts of Alberta are prepared in accordance with the *Financial Administration Act* and the *Sustainable Fiscal Planning and Reporting Act*. The Public Accounts consist of the annual report of the Government of Alberta and the annual reports of each ministry.

On June 9, 2023, the government announced new ministry structures. As such, responsibilities of the Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas and former Ministry of Forestry, Parks and Tourism were transferred to the Ministry of Forestry and Parks. The 2023-24 Annual Report reflects the 2023-26 Ministry Business Plans, the Government of Alberta Strategic Plan, as well as the ministry's activities and accomplishments during the 2023-24 fiscal year, which ended on March 31, 2024.

The Annual Report of the Government of Alberta contains Budget 2023 Key Results, the audited Consolidated Financial Statements and Performance Results, which compares actual performance results to desired results set out in the government's strategic plan.

This annual report of the Ministry of Forestry and Parks contains the Minister's Accountability Statement, the ministry's Financial Information and Results Analysis, a comparison of actual performance results to desired results set out in the Ministry Business Plan. This ministry annual report also includes:

- other financial information as required by the *Financial Administration Act* and *Sustainable Fiscal Planning and Reporting Act*, as separate reports, to the extent that the ministry has anything to report.

All Ministry Annual Reports should be considered along with the Government of Alberta Annual Report to provide a complete overview of government's commitment to openness, accountability, and fiscal transparency.

Minister's Accountability Statement

The ministry's annual report for the year ended March 31, 2024, was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Sustainable Fiscal Planning and Reporting Act* and the government's accounting policies. All the government's policy decisions as at May 31, 2024 with material economic or fiscal implications of which I am aware have been considered in the preparation of this report.

Original signed by Honourable Todd Loewen
Minister of Forestry and Parks

Message from the Minister



Albertans take great pride in our uniquely beautiful landscapes, diverse ecosystems and incredible outdoor recreation opportunities. The wonderful thing about our diverse provincial Crown lands is that they offer something different for everyone. Our ministry remains focused on achieving a balance of economic, cultural and environmental outcomes, ensuring Alberta's beautiful landscapes can be conserved and enjoyed by current and future generations, while supporting provincial economic outcomes.

We know how important the forest industry is to Alberta's economy and therefore, we recognize the need to protect and conserve our forests. Responsible forest management practices foster healthy, resilient forests that will support economic, cultural and environmental outcomes for generations to come. One of the most difficult challenges of 2023 was Alberta's unprecedented wildfire season. I want to thank our wildland firefighters and support staff for their dedication and hard work to suppress and slow the spread of wildfires, reducing the impacts to our communities and natural resources. The lessons we learned from last year informed an earlier start to our wildfire response and mitigation efforts this year. In addition to starting the wildfire season sooner, Budget 2024 provided funding for 100 new government firefighters and additional contract firefighters. We also received funding for additional air tankers, night-vision equipped helicopters, drones and artificial intelligence to better equip wildfire crews to fight wildfires and protect communities, wildlife and our forests.

Alberta's parks invite visitors to experience world-class recreation, conservation and education experiences. We were proud to welcome millions of visitors to provincial parks this year to enjoy unique experiences for all ages – including guided tours, educational programs and the 55th year of award-winning interpretive programming. To make it easier for visitors to find and book their next outdoor adventure when visiting a provincial park, we launched a new camping reservation platform this year – Shop.AlbertaParks.ca. Through this system, campers can find their perfect experience with ease, through enhanced features, improved system performance, and more payment options.

Our provincial parks also help us to preserve diverse and rare ecosystems, natural features, and heritage sites across the province. After establishing Big Island as Alberta's 77th Provincial Park last year, I was proud to announce the expansion of Alberta's parks system by establishing the new Kleskun Hills Provincial Park near Grande Prairie and the new La Biche River Provincial Recreation Area in Athabasca County, adding more than 1,000 hectares of new land to the parks system.

In April 2023, we released Alberta's Rangeland Grazing Framework. This framework was developed with input of grazing and cattle organizations to facilitate stewardship initiatives and investment specific to rangeland health and biodiversity. Alberta's grasslands play an important role in biodiversity and the province and dispositions holders share the responsibility to maintain and enhance the health, function and productivity of Alberta's provincial rangeland ecosystems.

As we continue to work on expanding outdoor recreation and business opportunities across the province, we are focused on providing more opportunities for people to experience Alberta's great outdoors. In March 2023, I announced more than \$211.3 million over three years to support high quality, low-cost recreation opportunities, to make sure that visitors can continue enjoying the natural, cultural and recreational benefits of Alberta's parks and public lands. In 2023-24, we

completed 82 campground, day-use areas and trail enhancement projects across the province. We know that the work to maintain Alberta's trails is a team effort and we appreciate the hard work of our partners. We provided 24 partner organizations approximately \$4 million in grant funding this past year to assist communities across Alberta in supporting recreation, tourism and environmental opportunities. To manage a growing trail network, we also released the first Alberta's Public Land Trails Guide which provides information to help users find recreation opportunities on public land and explore our trails systems.

While we work to manage our forests, parks and public lands, we know the importance of making processes more efficient and effective. To help reduce red tape and provide better service for Albertans, we took action on many areas, including eliminating a previous backlog and reducing decision times on applications to assign commercial/industrial/recreation dispositions on public land to a month or less. These are often financially significant transactions and reducing wait times saves applicants time and money as they work to seek necessary approvals for projects that help create jobs and support the economy.

These are only a few of our accomplishments over the past year. I am proud of the work we have done and will continue to do. As someone who enjoys spending time outdoors, I look forward to continuing this work providing high quality business and recreation opportunities while conserving Alberta's natural beauty for future generations.

Original signed by Honourable Todd Loewen
Minister of Forestry and Parks

Management's Responsibility for Reporting

The Ministry of Forestry and Parks includes the Department of Forestry and Parks.

The executives of the individual entities within the ministry have the primary responsibility and accountability for the respective entities. Collectively, the executives ensure the ministry complies with all relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

Ministry Business Plans, annual reports, performance results and the supporting management information are integral to the government's fiscal and strategic plan, annual report, quarterly reports, and other financial and performance reporting.

Responsibility for the integrity and objectivity of the accompanying ministry financial information and performance results for the ministry rests with the Minister of Forestry and Parks. Under the direction of the Minister, I oversee the preparation of the ministry's annual report, which includes the financial information, performance results on all objectives and initiatives identified in the Ministry Business Plan, and performance results for all ministry-supported commitments that were included in the 2023-26 Government of Alberta Strategic Plan. The financial information and performance results, out of necessity, include amounts that are based on estimates and judgments. The financial information is prepared using the government's stated accounting policies, which are based on Canadian public sector accounting standards. The performance measures are prepared in accordance with the following criteria:

- Reliable – Information used in applying performance measure methodologies agrees with the underlying source data for the current and prior years' results.
- Understandable – the performance measure methodologies and results are presented clearly.
- Comparable – the methodologies for performance measure preparation are applied consistently for the current and prior years' results.
- Complete – outcomes, performance measures and related targets match those included in the ministry's *Budget 2023*.

As Deputy Minister, in addition to program responsibilities, I am responsible for the ministry's financial administration and reporting functions. The ministry maintains systems of financial management and internal control which give consideration to costs, benefits, and risks that are designed to:

- provide reasonable assurance that transactions are properly authorized, executed in accordance with prescribed legislation and regulations, and properly recorded so as to maintain accountability of public money;
- provide information to manage and report on performance;
- safeguard the assets and properties of the province under ministry administration;
- provide Executive Council, the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Forestry and Parks the information needed to fulfill their responsibilities; and
- facilitate preparation of Ministry Business Plans and annual reports required under the *Sustainable Fiscal Planning and Reporting Act*.

In fulfilling my responsibilities for the ministry, I have relied, as necessary, on the executives of the individual entities within the ministry.

Original signed by Shannon Marchand
Deputy Minister of Forestry and Parks

May 31, 2024

Results Analysis

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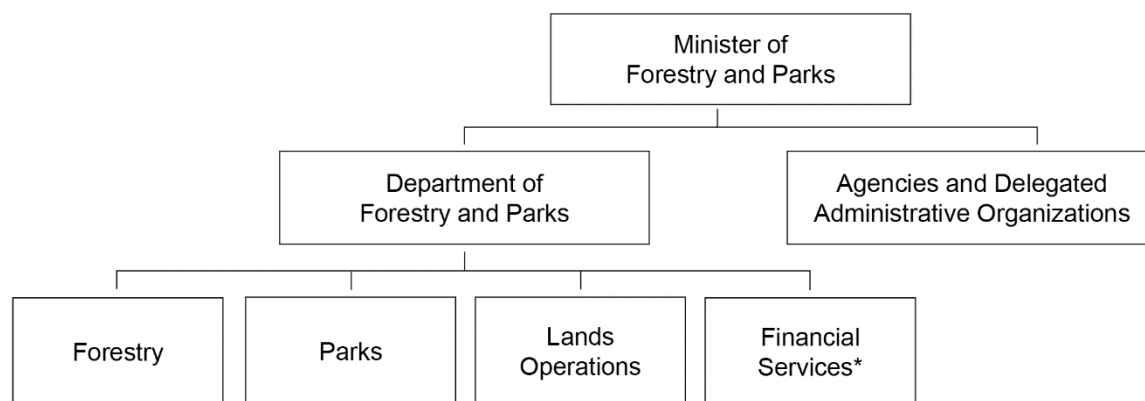
Ministry Overview

The Ministry of Forestry and Parks supports the well-being of Albertans through sustainable development and management of Alberta's lands, forests and parks.

Alberta's lands, forests and parks combine natural beauty, diverse ecosystems and vast terrain, and hold cultural significance for Indigenous peoples, who have inhabited these lands for thousands of years. Additionally, they provide numerous opportunities for economic development, recreation and conservation. The ministry works with Albertans and various stakeholders, including other governments, Indigenous communities, non-profit and volunteer organizations, and the private sector, to balance recreation and conservation, grow the economy, and overall maximize the benefits of Alberta Crown lands, including parks, rangelands and forests. The ministry also ensures the preservation of Alberta's forest resources through effective wildfire management, sustainable forest management practices, and maintenance of forest health. The ministry offers Albertans and visitors opportunities to explore unique natural landscapes, participate in nature-based experiences, and engage in outdoor recreational pursuits like hunting and angling, all while learning about Alberta's rich natural heritage.

On June 9, 2023, the government announced new ministry structures. As a result, the Key Objectives (and related Supporting Initiatives) and Performance Measures of the 2023-2026 Forestry, Parks and Tourism Business Plan became the reporting responsibility of the Ministry of Forestry and Parks, with the exception of Key Objective 2.3 (and related Supporting Initiative) and Performance Indicator 2b, which became the reporting responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism and Sport.

Organizational Structure



* Shares joint reporting responsibility with Agriculture and Irrigation

Operational Overview

Department of Forestry and Parks

The department represents the interests of Albertans in delivering a balanced and results-based approach to stewardship of Alberta's parks, public lands and forests to provide ecological, economic and socio-cultural benefits for current and future generations.

Financial Services Division

The division provides leadership in financial planning, manages financial reporting and systems, and supports the achievement of financial outcomes for the ministry.

Forestry Division

The division works to ensure that Alberta's Crown forests are sustainably managed and provides programs and services to position the province's forest sector for growth and diversification. This includes monitoring for and managing pests like mountain pine beetle, ensuring harvest levels are sustainable, supporting reforestation requirements, and helping create new markets and opportunities for Alberta forest products. The division also works to manage the threat of wildfire through prevention, risk reduction, and suppression.

Lands Operations Division

The division delivers an integrated regulatory and operational delivery approach to the management of provincial public land, which makes up over 60 per cent of the province. The division's work reflects a broad range of uses of public land including conservation, recreation, energy, forestry, agriculture, traditional use and others. This includes the allocation and regulatory functions for the sustainable use of Alberta's game species and fisheries. Conservation Officers are responsible for ensuring appropriate and safe Crown land use through natural resource protection and public safety.

Parks Division

The division focuses on managing the parks and protected area sites with high conservation, recreation and tourism potential. Through passionate staff and reliable partnerships, the Parks Division delivers safe, sustainable, and enjoyable nature-based experiences for Albertans and visitors. The Division also conducts strategic and park-level planning and is responsible for the Crown land capital and infrastructure development program.

Public Agencies

Public Agencies are arm's length entities that conduct work on behalf of the Alberta government. They are linked to ministries based on their mandate and are accountable to the responsible minister(s). Forestry and Parks provides oversight of ten public agencies that are classified, based on their mandate, as advisory, regulatory/adjudicative, and service delivery.

The Ministry of Forestry and Parks shares responsibility with the Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas for the associations, boards and societies listed with an asterisk.

*Alberta Conservation Association**

The Alberta Conservation Association encourages all Albertans to enjoy the outdoors. Members of the Association study the wildlife, fish and plants that live in Alberta to find ways to help them flourish. A key aspect of the Association is sharing its learnings about fish, wildlife, and habitat with the public.

*Alberta Professional Outfitters Society**

The Alberta Professional Outfitters Society is responsible for qualifying the province's guides and outfitters, the distribution, transfer, and leasing of game allocations and waterfowl privileges provided by the department, and sale of licenses and permits for guide-outfitting activities.

Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta

The Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta is responsible to establish and administer programs and initiatives to enhance Alberta's forest resource, promote the enhanced management of the forest resources of Alberta, improve the sustained yield of the forest resources of Alberta, promote integrated resource management and reforest public land using reforestation levies.

Kananaskis Improvement District Council

The Kananaskis Improvement District Council is responsible to provide effective local government and municipal services to residents and ratepayers. Council is accountable to residents and ratepayers as well as to the Minister of Forestry and Parks.

Public Lands Appeal Board

The Public Lands Appeal Board is responsible to hear and, if possible, resolve appeals of specified decisions for the regulated entities or directly affected parties as authorized under the *Public Lands Act* and the Public Lands Administration Regulation.

*Birch Mountains Wildland Provincial Park Cooperative Management Board***Birch River Wildland Provincial Park Cooperative Management Board***Dillon Wildland Provincial Park Cooperative Management Board***Kazan Wildland Provincial Park Cooperative Management Board***Richardson Wildland Provincial Park Cooperative Management Board**

The Boards were established to provide recommendations to the Minister on matters related to the development of park-specific management plans and implementation oversight. In addition to the government appointed positions, there are an additional twenty-three members and their alternates, representing many Indigenous communities.

Key Highlights

The Ministry of Forestry and Parks focused on accomplishing three outcomes identified in the 2023-26 Ministry Business Plan:

- Effective stewardship of Alberta’s provincial Crown land and forests.
- Providing timely, transparent decisions to support sustainable forestry, natural resource, and Crown land recreation economic opportunities consistent with government plans and policy.
- Albertans and visitors enjoy safe, accessible, and sustainable Crown land recreation experiences.

Key highlights and results achieved by the Ministry of Forestry and Parks in 2023-24 include:

- Responded to an unprecedented wildfire season in Alberta’s history, with 1,088 wildfires that burned more than 2.2 million hectares.
- Enhanced wildfire management capacity and resources in preparation for the 2024 wildfire season.
- Provided \$13.9 million in funding to construct of seven emergency fireguards and granted the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) \$5 million to administer a Community Fireguard Program.
- Provided FireSmart grants for over 130 projects to help communities focus on wildfire preparedness and mitigation. Grants were administered through the ministry, the FRIAA and the ministry’s agreement with Indigenous Services Canada.
- Invested \$4 million in innovative wildfire technologies including night-vision aircraft, artificial intelligence to better predict wildfire patterns, detection and avoidance technology to enable use of drones and crewed aircraft in the same space, and the potential use of remotely piloted aircraft systems in wildfire management.
- Created two new parks, Kleskun Hills Provincial Park and La Biche Provincial Recreation Area, adding more than 1,000 hectares of land to the provincial park system.
- Launched Shop.AlbertaParks.ca camping reservation platform in February 2024 offering reduced wait times, more payment options, and improved browsing and booking features.
- Celebrated 55 years of Alberta Parks’ interpretative programming and delivered approximately 1,600 public interpretative programs in 32 park locations, reaching over 110,000 Albertans.
- Invested over \$5 million in capital grants and investments to review, repair and replace watercourse crossings that are at risk of fragmenting fish habitat or impeding watershed productivity.
- Invested \$5.7 million on mountain pine beetle control and observed an over 98 per cent decrease in mountain pine beetle density since 2019.
- Reduced services standards timelines and application and renewal backlogs across several ministry programs resulting in streamlined processes and time savings for industry.
- Provided 24 partner organizations with \$3.95 million in grant funding through Alberta Public Land Trail Grants, Motorized Recreation Partnerships Grants and Kananaskis Partnership Grants to assist with trail management, recreation, tourism and environmental outcomes.

- Invested \$59.7 million to improve and expand recreation in and access to provincial parks and public land across the province, including 82 projects to enhance campgrounds, day-use areas and trails for the enjoyment of Albertans and visitors.
- Released the first Alberta's Public Land Trails Guide which generated over 5000 downloads since it was released in August.
- Released the Rangeland Grazing Framework in April 2023 to provide clarity on how grazing fits into the Crown land vision and integrated land management practices.
- Introduced a Feral Horse Management Framework in September 2023 to ensure both their sustainability and the sustainability of the ecosystems where they live.

The Ministry of Forestry and Parks remains committed to regulatory approaches and program delivery that reduces unnecessary government oversight and emphasizes outcomes, to improve access to government services, attract investment, support innovation and competitiveness, and grow Alberta businesses.

Discussion and Analysis of Results

Actions that support the priorities of the Government of Alberta Strategic Plan

Government of Alberta Strategic Plan Key Priority Two:

Standing up for Albertans

Objective eight: Building Better Communities

Alberta's government will support and fund local services and projects, ensure the availability of more affordable housing, and support creative industries.

Forestry and Parks Action:

Allocating \$104 million to refurbish and enhance outdoor recreational opportunities, buildings on Crown lands, and recreational trails to encourage Albertans and visitors to get outside and enjoy Alberta's more than 470 provincial parks and recreation areas.

Detailed reporting found in Key Objective 3.2 on page 27.

Outcome One: Effective stewardship of Alberta’s provincial Crown lands and forests

Alberta’s Crown land and forests provide Indigenous, environmental and social benefits and are a key component of the province’s economic prosperity. A continued healthy ecosystem requires the leveraging of effective consultation, collaboration and partners for the collective stewardship of Alberta’s natural resources for today and into the future.

Key Objectives

1.1 Ensure environmental outcomes, such as biodiversity and conservation, are achieved while supporting use and access for Indigenous, social, and economic benefits on Alberta’s Crown lands.

Over the past year, the ministry prioritized planning initiatives to ensure Alberta’s Crown land continues to be accessible for Albertans, a habitat for biodiversity, and productive for forest stewardship.

Expanding Alberta’s Provincial Park System

In 2023-24, the ministry created two new parks in northern Alberta and added more than 1,400 hectares of land to the provincial parks system. The creation of the new Kleskun Hills Provincial Park protects 1,087 hectares of sensitive grasslands to ensure future generations will continue to be able to appreciate these unique landscapes. The new La Biche River Provincial Recreation Area will provide staging and camping opportunities, as well as enhance support for hunting and motorized and non-motorized trail use within the adjacent La Biche River Wildland Provincial Park. The ministry also amended a park boundary to correct a legal land description, expanded three existing parks and deregulated twelve provincial recreation areas, most of which have been closed for decades and will now be managed as public land under the *Public Lands Act* to support continued public access and recreation.

Introducing a Feral Horse Management Framework

The ministry is working to protect Alberta’s feral horses and ensure their future sustainability and the sustainability of the ecosystems where they live. In September 2023, Alberta’s government introduced a Feral Horse Management Framework to provide guidance to sustainably manage feral horse populations, while continuing to ensure other animals and natural resources are protected. Development of the framework was a collaborative process with a Feral Horse Advisory Committee with members from industry, stakeholder organizations, First Nations and law enforcement. The framework considers integration with other land uses and establishes a collaborative approach to management whereby feral horses, livestock and wildlife can sustainably share the landscape.

There are six equine management zones in the province: Brazeau, Nordegg, Clearwater, Sundre, Ghost River and Elbow. Currently, there are over 1,400 feral horses, as determined through a ministry-led aerial survey conducted in January and February 2024. The results of the 2024 feral horse minimum count survey are a summary of all the horses observed during the survey and are considered scientifically accurate for management purposes. A specific focus on preventing population increases in the Elbow, Ghost and Sundre Equine Management zones will include initiatives such as adoption programs and contraception efforts by horse advocacy groups. These management plans are essential to protect Alberta’s wildlife, grazing animals and biodiversity, and mitigate any negative impact on sensitive ecosystems, wildlife, birds, fish, cattle and vegetation.

Improving Alberta's Watercourse Crossings

Alberta's Watercourse Crossing Program dedicates funding to address legacy issues of government-owned crossings, and consists of assessments, a remediation grant program, and a capital investment program. Assessments are being completed on approximately 800 government-owned crossings in high priority watersheds. Crossings are assessed for compliance with environmental laws, and the program funds the replacement and repair of watercourse crossing structures that are fragmenting fish habitat or impeding watershed productivity.

The ministry granted \$0.86 million in funding through the Watercourse Crossing Remediation Grant Program. The Municipal District of Pincher Creek and the Municipal District of Clearwater County each replaced one crossing in 2023-24. Remediation planning, including assessments and design, was ongoing on 18 crossings owned or managed by municipalities (i.e., Ponoka County, Municipal District of Bonnyville, Municipal District of Greenview, Woodlands County, Municipal District of Ranchland, and Municipal District of Pincher Creek).

The ministry invested \$4.4 million into the Watercourse Crossing Capital Investment Program in 2023-24. In partnership with the Ministry of Transportation and Economic Corridors, the remediation of five watercourse crossings were completed, including the replacement of three culverts in the Upper McLeod River watershed, replacement of one culvert in the Swan River watershed, and repair of a crossing in the Waterton River watershed. Remediation planning, including environmental assessment, engineering design and permitting, is continuing for 28 crossings. The ministry will continue to engage with new municipal partners to evaluate crossings that are causing erosion, excessive sedimentation and fragmentation of fish habitat in Alberta.

Advancing Forest Management Plans

The details of where, when and how trees on Alberta's Crown land are sustainably harvested and managed are outlined in forest management plans. These plans are approved by the government of Alberta with input from the public, interest groups and Indigenous communities and must align with species at risk requirements, maintain or enhance watershed health and function, and reduce wildfire risk among other important forest values. In 2023-24, one Forest Management Plan amendment approval was issued, and three other plans are under review with decisions expected in 2024-25. There are currently 12 Forest Management Plans under development. The ministry will continue to support the development of these plans in future years.

Educating Alberta's Future

The ministry also supported education initiatives to engage young Albertans on stewardship and forestry careers through working collaboratively with the Alberta Forest Products Association's Work Wild Program, and also supporting Inside Education to provide educators with tools and age-appropriate educational materials so they can engage in local school forestry and environment programming. The ministry provided a \$15,000 grant to Inside Education to support its March 2024 "Forest and Wildlife Youth Summit," as well as ongoing programming. Annually, the ministry provides approximately 70,000 tree seedlings to grade one students across Alberta. This long-standing program, initiated in the 1960s, coincides with Alberta Forest Week (early May) and creates an early childhood forum for the exploration of forests and forestry.

The Junior Forest Rangers program, in place since 1965, continued in 2023-24 to offer youth the opportunity to explore a career related to the forestry sector. This summer program employs fifty-four high school students as crew members and 18 post-secondary students or graduates as crew leaders. The Junior Forest Ranger crews complete forestry-related work projects and take part in various educational experiences alongside forestry professionals in the field. They also participate in an Indigenous culture camp that includes learning from an Elder and engaging in traditional practices.

1.2 Sustainably manage Alberta's forests and rangelands to ensure healthy ecosystems and to support a variety of land uses, biodiversity, and nature-based carbon sequestration.

Alberta's forests and rangelands are a place where Albertans make a living, recreate and connect with nature. They are also a place of incredible biodiversity. Protecting and supporting the health of these landscapes requires focused and sustained action.

Protecting the Health of Alberta's Forest Resources

Mountain pine beetle infestations threaten the long-term sustainability of Crown forest resources. In 2023-24, \$5.7 million was spent on mountain pine beetle control.

The region affected by mountain pine beetle in Alberta is decreasing over time as the populations have declined due active control programs, periods of intense cold, and reduced threat of inflights from other jurisdictions. In 2022-23, the hectares of annual newly mountain pine beetle infested land area continued to trend downward with 1,934 new hectares as determined by a Heli-GPS survey of more than 3.5 million hectares of forested area known to have active mountain pine beetle populations. Survey results indicated that mountain pine beetle density decreased from 3.5 trees/km² in 2019 to 0.06 trees/km² in 2023, over a 98 per cent decrease. The ministry will be shifting from a geographically widespread, all encompassing (slow the spread) control program to focus on detection, assessment and control actions where mountain pine beetle populations are increasing and threaten values at risk.

One aspect of the Mountain Pine Beetle Control Program, established in 2007, is administered by the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) to help protect Alberta's forest resource by supporting forest industry efforts in mountain pine beetle management. In 2023, the Municipal Grant Program was amended to also provide both funding and expert advice to municipalities that support mountain pine beetle management on municipal and private lands. The FRIAA allocated \$219,015 in 2023-24 to the program, down from \$274,933 in 2022-23 and \$514,409 in 2021-22. Over the last three years, there has been a reduction in proposals for detection and control work, and the focus is shifting to protection of seed orchards that provide valuable naturally occurring superior genetics for reforestation. The majority of proposals are for hanging verbenone around tree genetic sites to ward off beetle. As populations continue to decline, fewer management efforts are needed. For example, traps around log yards to prevent spread to surrounding forests were no longer being requested as the traps were not showing significant beetle catches in previous years. Only one municipality, located in southern Alberta, undertook control activities in 2023-24 as mountain pine beetle populations remain a concern there.

Performance Metric

1.b Performance Indicator: New area impacted by mountain pine beetle infestation

	Actual 2017-18	Actual 2018-19	Actual 2019-20	Actual 2020-21	Actual 2021-22	Actual 2022-23
New hectares impacted by Mountain Pine Beetle	144,754	178,909	77,637	23,051	8,981	1,934

Reclaiming Alberta's Forests

In 2023-24, the ministry provided the FRIAA with \$15 million in funding to administer grant programs to deliver on reclamation of harvested areas that were destroyed by wildfire, and to restore forests that were disturbed by other natural agents (for example, insects). Additionally, the federal government will contribute matching funds through their Two Billion Tree Program via a contribution agreement with the FRIAA. The forest sector previously met its obligations to reforest these areas after harvest; however, with the wildfire or insect and disease damage, government investment is supporting getting these areas back into growing healthy vibrant trees. Annually, the number of reclaimed hectares varies depending on the severity of the natural disturbances. Approximately 8,800 harvest areas totaling 165,000 hectares were burned in the 2023 wildfire season. For comparison, the forest sector harvests about 90,000 hectares annually.

Finalizing the Rangeland Grazing Framework

Crown rangelands support nearly 14 per cent of Alberta's beef herd, while also maintaining healthy ecosystems and creating economic activity. Alberta has a long history of developing and promoting stewardship on grazing dispositions with disposition holders. The Rangeland Grazing Framework, published in April 2023, continues to build on the role of the disposition holder being the steward. The framework aims to:

- Guide future rangeland and grazing program priorities and ensure alignment between government and industry.
- Facilitate stewardship initiatives on grazing dispositions that addresses management concerns.
- Ensure grazing disposition holders are carefully considered in future Crown land initiatives, such as recreation and trail planning, which could have a material impact on disposition holders.
- Guide current outstanding issues for grazing lease objectives and performance metrics.

The framework supports the essential role of grazing and rangeland stewardship by disposition holders and sets objectives that will be tied to future performance measures on rangeland sustainability.

1.3 Protect the health and resilience of Alberta's forest resources through effective wildfire management including the exploration and adoption of innovative technologies.

The ministry's efforts in wildfire management in 2023-24 extended beyond battling an unprecedented wildfire season and included the development of wildfire management plans, assessment and use of new technology, and delivery of mitigation programs.

Responding to the 2023 Wildfire Season

Wildfires are a natural component of Alberta's environment and landscape. In 2023, the province experienced widespread extreme wildfire conditions and unprecedented wildfire activity during its wildfire season (March 1 to October 31, 2023). The wildfires threatened human health and safety. Tens of thousands of Albertans evacuated from their homes, and 48 communities were impacted.

Tragically, in July 2023, a helicopter pilot was killed when he was fighting a wildfire near Haig Lake, in northern Alberta. The most significant property damage in 2023 happened in the community of Fox Lake with more than 100 homes and 200 structures destroyed by wildfire at the beginning of May. Wildfires also impacted natural resources, critical infrastructure, forest-based industries, and agricultural sectors.

Typically, surges in wildfire activity start in the middle to later part of May. In 2023, the first surge occurred on April 17, 2023, significantly earlier than normal; surges also lasted longer than usual. This was driven by unseasonably high temperatures, extremely dry conditions, low relative humidity, and strong winds, starting at the end of April and through May. At the beginning of May, a strong and persistent high-pressure ridge resulted in an early heat wave. Temperatures for the entire month averaged about 5°C warmer than normal (warmest May in the last 76 years of records). Due to the wildfire conditions, the ministry implemented a fire restriction or fire ban in all or some of the Forest Protection Area for 159 days. Wildfire conditions extended into the fall and winter, with drought conditions and below average precipitation.

In total, more than 2.2 million hectares burned during the 2023 wildfire season, which is the highest on record. The 2023 wildfire season had substantially more Class E wildfires (wildfires greater than 200 hectares) than the five-year average (67 wildfires compared to 18), and those wildfires were significantly larger in size. For example, in April and May there were a record number of wildfires over 1,000 hectares (a total of 33 wildfires), which included four wildfires over 100,000 hectares. Of the 1,088 wildfires that started during the 2023 wildfire season:

- 61 per cent of wildfires were caused by human activity.
- Lightning-caused wildfires represented 35 per cent of wildfires and burned nearly 80 per cent of the total area. Over 25 per cent of the lightning caused wildfires occurred in May.
- Four per cent of the wildfires remain under investigation, which often occurs with complex investigations or when further compliance or enforcement may be required.

The extreme and extended active wildfire load resulted in a significant and prolonged workload and resource demand through the entire 2023 fire season. Wildfire load refers to the number of all wildfires requiring suppression action during a given period. The ministry's 2023 budget provided for the employment of up to 432 seasonal firefighters for Alberta's wildfire response. Additionally, Forestry and Parks procured Firetack firefighting crews under sole source contracts, each with a guaranteed work period of 93 days, to Indigenous entities (Métis and First Nations). In 2023, the number of Firetack crews increased from 29 to 35, which is an increase from 232 to 280 Firetack firefighters and, as in previous years, the department provided training to Firetack leaders and members.

Alongside its permanent staff, seasonal firefighters, program support staff, and contract firefighters, the ministry received assistance from other agencies with 4,231 firefighters and support personnel imported from around the world, including 20 Type 1 Incident Management Teams. Assistance within Canada came from the Canadian Armed Forces, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, PEI, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon, Parks Canada, Canadian Forest Service, and the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre. Firefighters and support staff were also imported from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Chile, Costa Rica, and Mexico. The overall cost in 2023-24 for wildfire presuppression and response was \$851 million, which includes \$793 million in contingency funding.

In preparation for the 2024 wildfire season, the ministry enhanced its wildfire management capacity, with consideration of the severity of the fire season, the existing wildfire management programs and strategies, and ongoing and emerging wildfire management challenges. Opportunities were identified to better protect Albertans, communities, natural resources, and other values from wildfire. Key enhancements include the following:

- \$151 million of additional funding over three years in Budget 2024 for wildfire management;
- An increase of 192 full-time equivalents to provide professional, technical and program support and enhance seasonal response capacity in 2024;

- Securing contracts for two additional airtanker groups and two additional night vision helicopters, and adding five new contract firefighter crews;
- Expanding seasonal employment coverage in the early and late stages of the season all of which will enable enhanced coverage and capacity in spring and fall;
- Increasing employment of nighttime wildfire operations, including ground suppression efforts and use of night-vision equipped helicopters and nighttime heli-tanking; and
- Funding to begin the process of acquiring five new government owned air tankers.

Looking forward, the continued expansion of Alberta's communities, industry, and essential infrastructure into the province's forested and grassland areas, coupled with the increasing frequency and intensity of wildfires, has amplified the complexities of wildfire management. The ministry is developing an Alberta Wildfire Mitigation Strategy in partnership with the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Services to enhance Alberta's resilience to wildfires through collaborative actions. The ministry also supported the development of a Canadian Wildland Fire Prevention and Mitigation Strategy led by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers.

Advancing Wildfire Management Plans

Wildfire Management Plans are proactive planning tools to help identify, evaluate and prioritize where wildfire management resources would be assigned during a wildfire event, and to inform the best strategies and tactics required in wildfire suppression. To date, seven of ten Forest Areas have completed Wildfire Management Plans - Lac la Biche, Edson, Peace River, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Rocky Mountain House, and Calgary. Plans for the Slave Lake and Whitecourt Forest Areas are scheduled to be completed by summer 2024, with the development and completion of the High level Forest Area plan to follow.

Evaluating New Technologies

Over the past year, the ministry invested \$4 million in the following technologies to streamline and advance wildfire management practices:

- Continued modernization of wildfire application systems to support aviation costing, data analytics and reporting.
- Application of artificial intelligence and machine learning in the Wildfire Predictive Modeling Program to enhance wildfire prediction efforts and more efficiently allocate resources.
- Improved fuel condition mapping through the use of satellite imagery.
- Continued development of detection and avoidance technology to enable the use of drones and crewed aircraft in the same airspace.
- Evaluated the potential of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems in wildfire management through field trials and detailed evaluations in partnerships with other Canadian agencies.
- Implemented applications to enhance wildfire operations by providing real-time fire growth modelling and a mobile application that integrates with Government of Alberta geospatial tools to provide near real-time field collected spatial data.

Night Vision Imaging Systems (NVIS) were implemented in 2023 based on the success of a 2022 trial. NVIS enhances the ministry's ability to manage wildfires by enabling safe, effective and efficient response during the night when wildfire behaviour is typically less intense. Assembling grouped resources to suppress wildfires during the night-time period was tested in 2023. This group included two dozer groups, additional heavy equipment and water tenders, drones, NVIS helicopter, initial attack firefighters and sustained action firefighters. These configurations will continue to be implemented in 2024.

Additionally, the ministry held two contracts for water delivery methods in 2023 - one for high volume water delivery and one for sprinkler delivery systems. These were used on several wildfires including in Chipewyan Lake, Fox Lake, Deep Creek and Rainbow Lake. The ministry continues to take advantage of both water delivery systems, as well as making them available to municipalities.

Delivering Mitigation Programs

FireSmart

The FRIAA continued delivery of the FRIAA FireSmart Program (funded by the ministry) to help communities and residents manage and reduce the threat of wildfire by promoting the seven disciplines of FireSmart: development controls, public education, legislation, interagency cooperation, cross-training, emergency planning, and vegetation management. Funding opportunities were available to Alberta communities and municipalities, First Nations, Metis Settlements and Locals, and other eligible organizations. In 2023-24, 75 projects were completed, including 13 education and outreach projects; 17 community FireSmart plan developments or updates; 2 interagency/cross training exercises; one legislation project; and 42 vegetation management projects.

Forestry and Parks also directly funded the completion of 34 FireSmart projects at a total cost of \$0.9 million. This included 21 education and outreach projects; four FireSmart planning projects; one interagency/cross-training project; and eight 8 vegetation management projects.

Through the ministry's agreement with Indigenous Services Canada, 24 additional wildfire prevention and mitigation projects were completed on Indigenous peoples' lands in the Forest Protection Area totaling \$1.4 million. This included 12 community FireSmart plan developments or updates; one interagency/cross-training exercise; and 11 vegetation management projects.

Emergency and Community Fireguard Programs

Fireguards allow communities to be better prepared in the event a wildfire threatens their community, homes, and livelihoods. In June 2023, the ministry implemented the Emergency Fireguard Grant program in response to the extreme wildfire activities. Seven emergency fireguards were constructed, supported by \$13.9 million in ministry funding, for communities most at risk to the wildfire situation: Buck Creek, Grande Prairie, Dimsdale, Lac Ste. Anne, Valleyview, Gift Lake, and Fox Creek. The ministry also granted FRIAA \$5 million in 2023-24 and an additional \$12 million in 2024-25 to administer a Community Fireguard Program. This program financially supports at-risk communities interested in constructing community fireguards.

Prescribed Fire Plans / Hazard Reduction Burning

Hazard reduction burns are completed in and around communities in early spring and late fall in collaboration with local fire departments and ministry staff. In 2023, hazard reduction burning was completed in the Lac la Biche, Grande Prairie, High Level, Peace River, and Fort McMurray Forest Areas. The total area burned was approximately 1,374 hectares.

In addition to multiple hazard reduction burns across the Forest Protection Area, the ministry began building fireguards in preparation for a prescribed fire planned for the Ribbon Creek drainage in 2025 or later. The objective of this prescribed fire is to help maintain, restore and protect the area s recreation, tourism and ecological values.

1.4 Through effective partnerships with stakeholders and collaboration with Indigenous communities, improve provincial Crown land stewardship and uphold the rights of Indigenous peoples.

The ministry continues to work with municipalities, Indigenous communities, and a wide variety of civil society and non-profit organizations to ensure provincial parks are open, accessible, and fully protected under the applicable laws and regulations. In 2023-24, Forestry and Parks advanced grant funding to the following parks partners:

- \$250,000 to the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society;
- \$164,000 to the Eagle Point Blue Rapids Park Council for the operation of Eagle Point Provincial Park and Blue Rapids Provincial Recreation Area; and
- \$90,000 to the Municipal District of Lesser Slave River for the operation of Chain Lakes, Fawcett Lake, and Lawrence Lake Provincial Recreation Areas.

In the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration, Forestry and Parks is committed to supporting partnerships and collaborations with Indigenous peoples, including:

- Collaboration with Enoch Cree Nation on operationalizing Big Island Provincial Park in the North Saskatchewan River Valley;
- Delivery of culturally sensitive interpretive programming at Writing-on-Stone/Áísínai'pi Provincial Park, as well as the continued stewardship of Indigenous Rock Art features in collaboration with Elders and Knowledge Keepers from the Blackfoot Confederacy;
- Continued operation of the Kehiwin Provincial Recreation Area and campground, in northeast Alberta by Kehewin Cree Nation, through a lease;
- Continued operation, since 2018, of two tipi comfort camping units in Sir Winston Churchill Provincial Park, which were built in collaboration with Lac la Biche Canadian Native Friendship Centre Association;
- Contract arrangement with Cold Lake First Nations to provide maintenance services at English Bay Provincial Recreation Area through an active service contract;
- Installation of bilingual Dene-Suline/English signage at the English Bay Provincial Recreation Area which was developed in conjunction with Cold Lake First Nations;
- Community engagement at the Kikino Métis Settlement through a school presentation on Conservations Officers and participation at a career event;
- Consultation with Indigenous communities on 55 timber program operational forestry plans and the development of two wildfire management plans; and
- Overseeing proponent-led Indigenous consultations for two stand-alone herbicide application plans, 15 Forest Management Plans under development, and several operational forest harvesting and reforestation development plans.

Performance Metric

1.a Performance Measure: Percentage of wildfires contained before 10 a.m. the day following assessment

Prior Years' Results				2023 Target	2023 Actual
2019	2020	2021	2022		
95.3%	99.4%	95.3%	94.0%	95.0%	87.2%

Source: FIRES database

In 2023, the ministry contained 87.2 per cent of wildfires before 10 a.m. the day following assessment.

Description: This performance measure reports how successful the ministry is in containing wildfire events by 10 a.m. the day following assessment.

Rationale: Prompt containment reduces rapid spread and intensity of wildfires, protecting Albertans and minimizing losses and suppression costs. The protection of lives and communities will always be the top priority when responding to wildfires.

Result and Variance Explanation: Alberta's 2023 wildfire season (March 1 to October 31) was severe and the worst on record in terms of hectares burned. A total of 1,088 wildfires burned approximately 2.2 million hectares. The five-year average during the same period is 1,107 wildfires and approximately 226,273 hectares burned.

Several external factors can impact the results of this performance measure, including extreme weather events, number of wildfires occurring concurrently, drought conditions, winds, and precipitation.

Wildfire activity in 2023 started early, accelerated quickly, and continued into the winter months. In the last ten years, the average number of new wildfires per day between the beginning of April and mid-May trended most frequently below ten per day, peaking between an average of 10 and 16 new wildfires per day in early May. In 2023, the number of new wildfires per day was above the ten-year average, with several days above 15 new starts between mid-April and early-May peaking at or above 30 new wildfires on each of May 4, May 5, and May 6, 2023. On May 6, 2023, the province declared a provincial state of emergency due to the wildfire situation; the declaration expired on June 3, 2023. Fire danger levels were very high to extreme throughout most of the province during May and into June. Below normal moisture levels occurred in the fall and winter, resulting in a higher than usual number of wildfire suppression activities during this period.

Outcome Two: Provide timely transparent decisions to support environmentally sustainable forestry, natural resource, and tourism economic opportunities consistent with government plans and policy

To support diversified economic prosperity, the ministry remained committed to creating a business environment and infrastructure upon which the forest, natural resource and outdoor recreation sectors can thrive and achieve their economic potential.

Key Objectives

2.1 Minimize regulatory and process barriers to improve service delivery, reduce red tape, and support economic opportunities on Crown lands and forests.

The ministry continues to evaluate opportunities to reduce red tape, shorten approval timelines and modernize systems to remove regulatory barriers and provide enhanced services to Albertans.

Improving Service Standards

In 2023, the ministry reduced timelines on three forestry industry service standards: Alberta Vegetation Inventory (AVI) Final Submission Approvals, Export Approvals, and Import Authorizations.

- A service standard of 45 days was introduced to ensure timely AVI and approvals. Two approvals were granted in 2023-24 with an average approval time of 13 days.
- The service standard for log import authorizations and unmanufactured forest product export authorizations is set at 10 days.
- In 2023-24, 10 import requests and 26 export requests were granted with average approval times of four to six days.

The ministry also achieved substantial improvements in issuing land dispositions and related approval processes, supported by simplifying requirements, reducing complexity, and reducing effort for low-risk applications. Improvements included:

- Eliminating the backlog of grazing lease renewals, and renewing current grazing leases ahead of expiry;
- Eliminating the backlog of all assignment applications, including agricultural, commercial/industrial and recreation;
- Decreasing the decision timeline for agriculture assignments to about 30 days from two to three years; and
- Reducing the approval time from three months to less than three weeks on 30 per cent of applications for electricity distributors.

Ministry performance on meeting established services standards decisions under the *Public Lands Act* will be reported in future annual reports. In 2022-23, 77 per cent of applications for use of public land were processed with the service standards for regulatory approval decisions. Continued business improvements that remove barriers and increase capacity for application reviews will result in a steady improvement in performance.

The ministry also released amended plan requirements for Crown land dispositions, leveraging the professional responsibility of Alberta Land Surveyors to reduce plan and review requirements, enabling applicants to use lower cost plan types for many dispositions. This saves applicants both time and money and speeds up approval decisions.

Reducing Red Tape

In 2023-24, Alberta Parks reduced the following process barriers to improve service delivery:

- **Commercial Film and Photography Permits:** In May 2023, the application process for permits transitioned online to be more accessible and efficient.
- **Streamlining Permit Payments:** Payments for Guiding and Instructing Permits, Alberta Parks Special Events Permits, and Alberta Parks Commercial Film and Photography Permits were moved to Shop.AlbertaParks.ca via an emailed payment link. This provides customers with 24-hour access and faster transaction processing times by replacing previous cheques and money orders.

The Timber Harvest Planning and Operating Ground Rules were successfully implemented after a major overhaul in 2022. An implementation review of the 2023 Timber Harvest Planning and Operating Ground Rules was undertaken, resulting in administrative enhancements that improve regulatory clarity. Extensive training to forest industry staff and ministry staff was completed to ensure a smooth implementation for the spring release of the 2024 Timber Harvest Planning and Operating Ground Rules.

Modernizing Digital Systems

The ministry successfully launched a new Alberta Parks camping reservation platform, Shop.AlbertaParks.ca, in February 2024. Key features of this new platform include reduced wait times, more payment options for campers, and improved browsing and booking features. This change is ensuring continued reliable and stable service while maintaining our customer-friendly approach to managing camping in Alberta.

The ministry continued its collaboration with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations' Aboriginal Consultation Office to develop the Aboriginal Consultation Office Digital Service system for Alberta forest companies to facilitate a more efficient Indigenous consultation application process and reduce review timelines. Implementation was delayed until spring 2024 due to resourcing constraints due to the 2023 wildfire season. Enhancements to digital business applications will reduce submission requirements and shorten approval timelines.

2.2 Through implementation of the Forest Jobs Action Plan, ensure long-term access to a sustainable and secure fibre supply for the forestry sector.

This objective aims to provide the forestry industry with secure access to wood fibre. In 2023-24, efforts focused on renewal of Forest Management Agreements and timber quotas as well as supporting programs that increase the domestic use of Alberta manufactured wood products.

Timber permits enable short-term access to fibre (up to five years) for community timber program members and commercial operators. In 2023-24, the ministry issued a total of 46 timber permits, including 22 permits issued to support access to fire-damaged timber from the 2023 wildfire season.

Timber quotas are a renewable form of tenure that enable secure access to fibre for up 20-year periods. In 2023-24, a total of four timber quotas and nine licences, which enable timber harvesting under timber quotas, were renewed. An additional four licences were amended to support access to fire-damaged timber.

Two Forest Management Agreement amendments were undertaken to enable the sale of two pulp mills to new operators. These amendments also necessitated changes to quotas within the agreement areas. One sale closed in 2023-24, the other closed early in 2024-25.

Through the government commitment of a multi-year grant to support to the Alberta Wood WORKS! Program, the Alberta Forest Products Association delivered programming aimed at increasing the use of Alberta-manufactured wood products in domestic building construction. Wood is a natural solution for sequestering carbon that also displaces carbon-intensive construction materials. Efforts to influence project developers resulted in the procurement of \$48.6 million of Alberta wood products that otherwise would not have been purchased and 97,835 tonnes of sequestered carbon. Grant funding of \$250,000 per year was approved for 2023-24 through 2025.

2.4 Advocate for fair and open access to markets for the forestry sector.

In 2023-24, the ministry submitted administrative review response documents for Alberta's contribution to the Canadian softwood lumber defence, as well as appearances and filings in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Canada-United States Mexico Agreement panel reviews of countervailing duties. The ministry also participated in a NAFTA review of the United States International Trade Commission's 2023 Sunset Review decision. Litigation and advocacy efforts are ongoing in collaboration with Alberta's Senior Representative to the United States, Alberta's forest industry, the Government of Canada, and other provincial governments.

In 2023-24, the ministry supported a grant to the Canada Wood Group to administer programming aimed at supporting market development in Asia and provide focused trade services to Alberta's forest industry. Extensive technical development has led to code recognition of Alberta spruce-pine-fir lumber and oriented strand board constructed assemblies in markets in Asia, thereby eliminating market access barriers for Alberta manufacturers. Grant funding of \$500,000 annually was disbursed for 2023-24 activities.

2.5 Apply integrated development and capital planning to support infrastructure and service improvements for high volume and potential new tourist areas.

Proposed recreation infrastructure and services projects were identified in key high recreation areas across the province as part of the ministry mandate to improve infrastructure in high use recreational areas, specifically Kananaskis, Canmore, Waiparous Creek, and Crowsnest Pass. Potential upgrades are being evaluated and will focus on increasing the sustainability on infrastructure, increasing access, and preserving experiences for Albertans.

Work also began on planning trail upgrades in high use areas, including the Canmore area, which is one of high demand, need and interest. A Canmore Area Trails Strategy is being developed through stakeholder collaboration and future public engagement to proactively address these needs with a goal to establish an integrated, authorized, and sustainable trail system for lands across the Bow Valley that support the functioning of wildlife corridors and habitat patches, while maintaining outdoor recreation and visitor experiences. The first phase will be to implement recommendations arising from past studies, with an initial focus on trails that see a higher number of rescues, erosion, degradation and human-wildlife encounters, followed by refurbishments that will increase sustainability, assist with user experience and increase public safety.

Outcome Three: Albertans and visitors enjoy sustainable, accessible, and safe tourism and outdoor recreation experiences

Alberta has significant outdoor recreation opportunities which contribute to the province's economic prosperity and the well-being of Albertans. This outcome focuses on sustaining recreation opportunities so Albertans can play in Alberta's outdoors.

Key Objectives

3.1 Work with the public, stakeholders, and Indigenous communities through an environmentally responsible policy framework to develop medium to long term strategic plans for Alberta's provincial parks system, Crown land recreation, and tourism.

With the release of new mandate letters in June of 2023, the work on this objective became focused on the mandate to develop a Recreation and Conservation Strategy with the goal to expand public access while protecting natural spaces on Crown lands. This strategy will be a multi-year blueprint to guide management of Alberta's Crown lands to enhance recreational opportunities and ensure the sustainability of the province's natural landscapes. The ministry will be working closely with stakeholders to develop the strategy, including Indigenous communities, trail organizations, conservation groups, hunting and fishing organizations, and others throughout the development. The strategy is expected to be released in 2025.

The ministry is also undertaking the development of a new Plan for Parks to define a strategic vision and key priorities for the provincial parks system. This will replace the 2009-2019 Plan for Parks that guided the management of Alberta's parks for over the last decade. The plan will be developed with input from Albertans, stakeholders and Indigenous communities and is targeted to be released in 2025.

The ministry also completed initial internal planning on the approach to building more than 900 new campsites, including comfort camping, over the next 10 years while investing in trails, infrastructure, and services to support outdoor recreation in Alberta.

3.2 Maintain or improve operations, infrastructure, and visitor experience on Alberta provincial parks and public lands through capital investment, education, and compliance and implementation of the *Trails Act*.

As Alberta's parks are open and accessible to Albertans and visitors, the ministry focused on creating outdoor recreation and camping opportunities, building trails and facilities, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the parks system in an environmentally responsible way.

- More than 253,000 Alberta Parks camping reservations were processed.
- 93 seasonal wage staff were hired for Alberta Parks summer and winter operations.
- Approximately 90 Park Rangers had over 172,000 contacts with parks' visitors, supporting compliance, visitor experience, and sustainability.
- William Watson Lodge, which provides barrier-free experiences for seniors and persons with disabilities, was consistently booked at capacity, welcoming more than 6,800 visitors to Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. The facility received an overall visitor satisfaction rate of 97 per cent.
- The Winagami Wading Pool in Winagami Lake Provincial Park re-opened in August 2023 after it had been closed since 2019 due to infrastructure issues.

- Alberta Parks celebrated 55 years of interpretative programming in 2023 and delivered approximately 1,600 public interpretative programs in 32 park locations, reaching over 110,000 Albertans.
- Dinosaur Provincial Park, Miquelon Lake Provincial Park, Writing on Stone Provincial Park and Kananaskis Country received Awards of Excellence from Interpretation Canada for their amphitheater shows.

Improving and Expanding Access through Capital Investments

Crown land sites continued to be managed for their legislated conservation and recreation outcomes – with a focus on achieving sustainable recreation objectives. In 2023-24, the ministry managed a range of recreation infrastructure including:

- Individual, group and backcountry campsites and associated infrastructure;
- Roads and parking;
- Trails and trailheads;
- Boat launches, boardwalks, stairways, viewing platforms, playgrounds, day use areas, etc.; and
- Specialized facilities, such as William Watson Lodge, Canmore Nordic Centre, and Hidden Valley Ski Resort.

In 2023-24, the ministry invested \$59.7 million to improve and expand recreation in and access to provincial parks and public land across the province so that Albertans and visitors alike can continue to enjoy Alberta's parks and public land now and in the future. Eighty-two campground, day-use areas and trail enhancement projects across the province were completed, including:

- Refurbished Big Elbow Provincial Recreation Area backcountry campground with the creation of an equestrian section that includes new campsites, separate access, amenities and public facilities. The project also repaired trails and installed wayfinding signage.
- Modernized Aspen Beach Provincial Park, including developing a new shower building and refurbishing campsites, electrical systems, and sanitation facilities.
- Repaired and upgraded of sanitary stations and wastewater systems at Chain Lakes Provincial Park, Beauvais Lake Provincial Park, and Saskatoon Island Provincial Park.
- Completed trail repairs and refurbishments in Dinosaur, Castle, and Cypress Hills Provincial Parks, Kananaskis Country and Terishshner trail in the Kiska/Willson Public Land Use Zone.
- Completed assessment, planning and design work for trail refurbishments at Cardinal Headwaters in Coal Branch Public Land Use Zone, the MacKenzie Creek watershed, Mount Hamell, Muskeg Falls, and Twin Falls.
- Completed phase two of the Rail Trail project in Clearwater County and the detailed design of phase three; and
- Completed safety upgrades to recreation infrastructure in the David Thompson Corridor.

Managing an Expansive Trail Network

In 2023-24, Alberta released the first Alberta's Public Land Trails Guide which has generated over 5,000 downloads since it was released in August. The ministry delivered several programs and services to manage trails across the province to increase the access and quality of Alberta's provincial trail system, as well as to support trail managers, appointed under the *Trails Act* to maintain and repair trails across the province.

Public Lands Trail and Partnerships Grants

Twenty-four partner organizations received a total of \$3.95 million in grant funding in 2023-24 through 14 Alberta Public Land Trail Grants, two motorized Recreation Partnerships Grants, and eight Kananaskis Partnership Grants to provide sustainable funding and support partnerships in assisting with recreation, tourism and environmental outcomes. The program facilitated work with 30 partner organizations, completing trail-related work and environmental stewardship projects, including three provincial Trail Manager organizations assisting in the management of 3,485 kilometres of trail under agreement.

Key partners include the Alberta Snowmobile Association, the Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association, Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad, Bragg Creek Trails, and the Great Divide Trail Association. Trail management activities include trail construction, grooming and maintenance, trail planning, safety and education, trail marking and signage, and environmental controls such as erosion control and drainage improvements.

Trail Management Plans

Two trail management plans were completed in 2023-24: The United Riders of Crowsnest Pass and the West Bragg Creek Trails Mater Plan. Five additional management plans are underway and expected to be completed in 2024-25: Wapiti Sand Dunes Trail Network, Red Willow Falls Trail, Hamlet of Grande Cache Trail Network, Mackenzie Creek Off-Highway Vehicle Trail Re-route, and Pathway to the Park.

Recreation and Education Program

Ministry staff provided education to recreation users through:

- Public interactions during day and long weekend patrols;
- Event attendance at 26 organized functions;
- Deployment of educational literature to increase public knowledge related to safe, responsible recreation; area-specific legislation and regulations; and compliance with the Public Land Camping Pass and Kananaskis Conservation Pass; and
- Updates to signage at recreation sites.

Keeping Albertans and Visitors Safe

In 2023-2024, the ministry deployed 87 conservation officers across all parks, protected areas and public lands. These armed peace officers are highly trained and specialize in conservation enforcement which includes public education, proactive presence, public safety, response to public complaints and emergency response rescue, including human wildlife conflict. The Forestry and Parks and Public Safety and Emergency Services cross-ministry Conservation and Enforcement Steering Committee provides operational direction for both respective officers to ensure the delivery of a cohesive conservation enforcement program within Alberta.

Conservation officers recorded 70,722 public contacts and 3,570 formal enforcement actions (written warning or summons) related to illegal activity on Crown land in 2023-24. Only five per cent of all recorded interactions result in formal enforcement, demonstrating an emphasis on education and collaboration as the primary approach to addressing public compliance.

3.3 Through investment, alternative service delivery models, and a common-sense fee structure, ensure Albertans have access to sufficient high quality and low cost outdoor recreation sites.

The ministry ensured Albertans had access to high quality and low-cost recreation throughout the province in 2023-24. The ministry routinely reviews fees to ensure alignment with jurisdiction averages and improve cost recovery with consideration to capital upgrades. No parks fee increases were implemented in 2023-24, and Alberta continued to rely on extensive support from partners. Over 180 Alberta Parks have partnerships in place throughout the province to enhance and provide recreational opportunities for Albertans, including for the operation of campgrounds.

Re-investing in Kananaskis

Kananaskis is a well-loved landscape that is used for myriad reasons by many Albertans. It is considered a premium mountain destination, with recreational services and facilities on par with Banff National Park. It continues to be a destination for Albertans and visitors from across the country and around the world. Since 2021, high visitation levels have persisted in 2023, the area received almost five million visitors.

In 2021, the Alberta government introduced the Kananaskis Conservation Pass, a vehicle-based day-use fee for access to facilities in the Kananaskis Country and the Bow Valley Corridor. The Pass was introduced to help protect Kananaskis Country for the future by addressing the pressures of increasing visitation through a stable and targeted revenue source. In 2023-24, approximately \$12.1 million was collected from the Kananaskis Conservation Pass. This accounts for approximately 60 per cent of the annual Kananaskis Country budget, which exceeds \$20 million for park operations annually. Revenue was re-invested to support a wide variety of conservation programs, public safety services, trails, and facilities that make visiting this part of our province so enjoyable for day use and overnight visitors alike.

In 2023-24, \$12.1 million in Kananaskis Conservation Pass revenues were reinvested in Kananaskis Country in:	
Conservation and environmental education initiatives	\$0.95 million
Investments in trail stewardships and maintenance	\$2.2 million
Mountain rescue and dispatch	\$1.5 million
Recreation planning and administration	\$1.6 million
Facilities Operation and Maintenance	\$3.85 million
Enforcement technology and resources	\$2.0 million

Camping on Public Lands

Alberta’s public lands showcase the diversity and dramatic beauty of this province, and it is important to ensure the public has reasonable access to these lands. In 2023-24, \$1.1 million in revenue from the Public Lands Camping Pass was reinvested to maintain infrastructure, improve public education, support conservation, monitor and enforce rules, promote public safety, and provide better waste management. This revenue was supplemented by operational budget to manage and improve recreation across all public lands in Alberta.

Responsible Fish and Wildlife Management

Alberta’s fish and wildlife resources are carefully managed to provide high quality recreational opportunities and sustainable use. In 2023-24, the ministry

- Continued the Ministers Special Licence program for antlered moose, antlered elk, antlered mule deer, trophy antelope, trophy big horn sheep, and wild turkey.
- Added 19 WMUs to existing cougar management areas (CMA) and created six new CMAs, including Cypress Hills Provincial Park.

Hunting and fishing license revenue generated through annual sales is used to support sound fisheries and wildlife management programs and development recreational opportunities. For the 2023-24 licensing year, \$28.4 million was generated through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, of which \$13.9 million was directed to the Alberta Conservation Association to support conservation efforts.

Performance Metric

3.a Percentage of Albertans that are satisfied with the quality of services and facilities of provincial parks and campgrounds

Prior Years' Results			2023-24 Target	2023-24 Actual
2020-21	2021-22	2022-23		
86%	85%	86%	85%	87%

Source: Reserve.AlbertaParks.ca survey

In 2023-24, 87% of Albertans reported they were satisfied with the quality of services and facilities of provincial parks and campgrounds.

Description: This performance measure reports how successful the ministry is at delivering quality services and facilities, as reported by Albertans, in provincial parks and campgrounds.

Rationale: Ministry initiatives such as the online reservation system, environmental education and interpretation programs, and the evaluation of visitor experience survey results are ongoing initiatives that are anticipated to maintain visitor satisfaction rates over the next 3 years. Continued capital investments towards the refurbishment and enhancement of outdoor recreational opportunities, natural features and buildings on Crown lands is intended to maintain a high level of services and facilities for a growing Albertan population.

Result and Variance Explanation: Consistent with previous years, the majority of Albertans (87%) who have visited an Alberta provincial park in the past 12 months were satisfied with the quality of services and facilities they encountered. Overall satisfaction has been gradually trending upwards since 2021-22 which indicates that ministry initiatives and capital investments towards enhancing visitor experiences is maintaining a high level of satisfaction amongst Albertans.

Performance Measure and Indicator Methodology

Performance Measure 1.a: Percentage of wildfires contained before 10 a.m. the day following assessment

The result of this measure is derived by dividing the number of wildfires contained by 10 a.m. the day following assessment by all wildfires that occur during the fire season (March 1 to October 31). The result is expressed as a percentage. This includes all wildfires except for those occurring in areas identified in Wildfire Management Plans as needing a less aggressive response.

Wildfire events in the province are tracked for location, detection date and time, assessment date and time, control and containment time, cause of wildfire, and resources used. The results of the performance measure indicate how quickly the department controls wildfires. This information is aggregated and reported under this measure.

The data for this indicator is sourced from the department's Fire Information Resource System (FIRES); a database and application that captures much of Forestry and Parks wildfire management information. The system standardizes the collection and entry of data, provides data in a standard format for decision support systems, tracks the number of wildfire resources being utilized, and maintains historical records about wildfires and weather. Business rules are built into FIRES data entry and updates to ensure information is accurately entered. At year-end, data on wildfire events are extracted from FIRES and used to calculate results reported under this measure.

Source: Forestry and Parks

Performance Measure 3.a: Percentage of Albertans that are satisfied with the quality of services and facilities of provincial parks and campgrounds

The result of this measure is collected through a survey tool Opinio designed to collect information on Alberta Parks visitor satisfaction, calculated by dividing the total number of visitors who responded to the Reserve.AlbertaParks.ca survey and are satisfied with the quality of services and facilities by the total number of visitors who responded to the survey. The result is expressed as a percentage.

Scope includes all Reserve.AlbertaParks.ca users that purchased a camping permit and participated in the opt-in electronic survey. Survey respondents have the option to select six satisfaction ratings. Satisfied equates to only those that respond as 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied.' Survey data is reviewed for completeness and validity, and reviewed by management.

Data is standardized and analyzed in SPSS Statistics under business rules that limit access to collection, processing, recording and reporting information. Results are housed in a dashboard format within PowerBI.

Source: Forestry and Parks

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Ministry Financial Highlights

Statement of Revenues and Expenses (unaudited) Year Ended March 31, 2024

	2024		2023	Change from	
	Budget (Restated)	Actual	Actual (Restated)	Budget	2023 Actual
<i>In thousands</i>					
Revenues					
Government transfers	\$ 25,911	\$ 62,411	\$ 19,422	36,500	42,989
Investment income	-	1	13	1	(12)
Premiums, fees and licenses	301,903	221,280	292,699	(80,623)	(71,419)
Other	13,617	26,555	12,961	12,938	13,594
Ministry total	341,431	310,247	325,095	(31,184)	(14,848)
Inter-ministry consolidation adjustments	(1,052)	(1,505)	(594)	(453)	(911)
Adjusted ministry total	340,379	308,742	324,501	(31,637)	(15,759)
Expenses - directly incurred					
Programs					
Ministry Support Services	4,368	4,495	1,909	127	2,586
Forests	183,598	990,246	303,528	806,648	686,718
Parks	119,983	107,022	102,411	(12,961)	4,611
Lands	47,185	52,277	49,903	5,092	2,374
Hunting and Angling	13,290	13,124	12,099	(166)	1,025
Ministry total	368,424	1,167,164	469,850	798,740	697,314
Inter-ministry consolidation adjustments	(2,169)	(1,506)	(475)	663	(1,031)
Adjusted ministry total	366,255	1,165,658	469,375	799,403	696,283
Annual deficit	\$ (25,876)	\$ (856,916)	\$ (144,874)	\$ (831,040)	\$ (712,042)

Revenue and Expense Highlights

Revenues

Total revenue for the Ministry was \$310 million, \$31 million lower than budget and \$15 million lower than 2022-23.

Change from Budget 2023-24

- Revenue from the Government of Canada was \$36.5 million more than budget, largely due to a more extreme wildfire season, leading to increased funding for wildfire presuppression and response services on lands under federal jurisdiction (\$56.7 million), partially offset by less funding for mountain pine beetle control (\$20.7 million) due to declining beetle populations.
- Premiums, Fees and Licenses were \$80.6 million lower than budget, primarily due to lower than expected timber royalties (\$93.5 million) due to decreasing lumber prices, partially offset by higher than anticipated land dispositions and public lands grazing fees (\$12.2 million).
- Other Revenue was \$12.9 million higher than budget primarily due to higher than anticipated revenue for wildfire presuppression and response services provided as part of the Mutual Aid Resource Sharing agreement, due to an unprecedented wildfire season across Canada and in other countries.

Change from 2022-23 Actual

- Revenue from the Government of Canada was \$43 million higher than 2022-23, mostly due to increased funding for wildfire presuppression and response services on land under federal jurisdictions (\$54.5 million), partially offset by a decrease in funding for mountain pine beetle control (\$11.5 million) due to decreasing beetle populations and the completion of the mountain pine beetle survey and control agreement in the prior year.
- Premiums, Fees and Licenses decreased by \$71.4 million compared to last year, primarily due to lower timber royalties and fees (\$81 million) resulting from falling lumber prices, partially offset by higher lands and grazing revenue of \$9.6 million.
- Other Revenue increased by \$13.6 million, primarily due to higher revenue (\$11.4 million) for wildfire presuppression and response services provided to other jurisdictions under the Mutual Aid Resource Sharing agreement, due to an unprecedented wildfire season across Canada and in other countries.

Expenses

Total expense for the Ministry was \$1.2 billion, \$798.7 million higher than budget and \$697.3 million more than 2022-23.

Change from Budget 2023-24

- Forests was \$806.6 million higher than budget, due to an unprecedented extreme wildfire season resulting in higher staffing costs for wildland firefighting, higher supplies and services costs for wildland firefighting goods and services, such as aircraft and heavy equipment, and increased funding provided for community fireguard and other wildfire initiatives.
- Parks was \$13 million lower than budget, primarily due to a \$7.6 million surplus in capital grants for Big Island Provincial Park due to delays in the project, combined with a \$5.4 million decrease in amortization due to delays in the completion of capital projects.
- Lands was \$5.1 million higher than budget, mainly due to increased staffing costs for environmental enforcement of parks and public lands during the spring wildfires, and inflationary pressures on supplies and services required to meet operational requirements, such as vehicle leases and fuel costs.

Change from 2022-23 Actual

- Forests was \$686.7 million higher than the prior year, including increased salaries, wages and employment contracts, supplies and services and grants, due to the impacts of the 2023 unprecedented extreme wildfire season.
- Parks was \$4.6 million higher than the previous year due to inflationary pressures for supplies and contracted services, increased visitation resulting in additional parks operational and maintenance costs, and the restoration of park interpretation programming across the province.
- Lands was \$2.3 million higher than last year due to increased staffing costs, resulting from overtime related to spring wildfire season and recruitment, and higher supplies and services costs due to inflationary pressures.

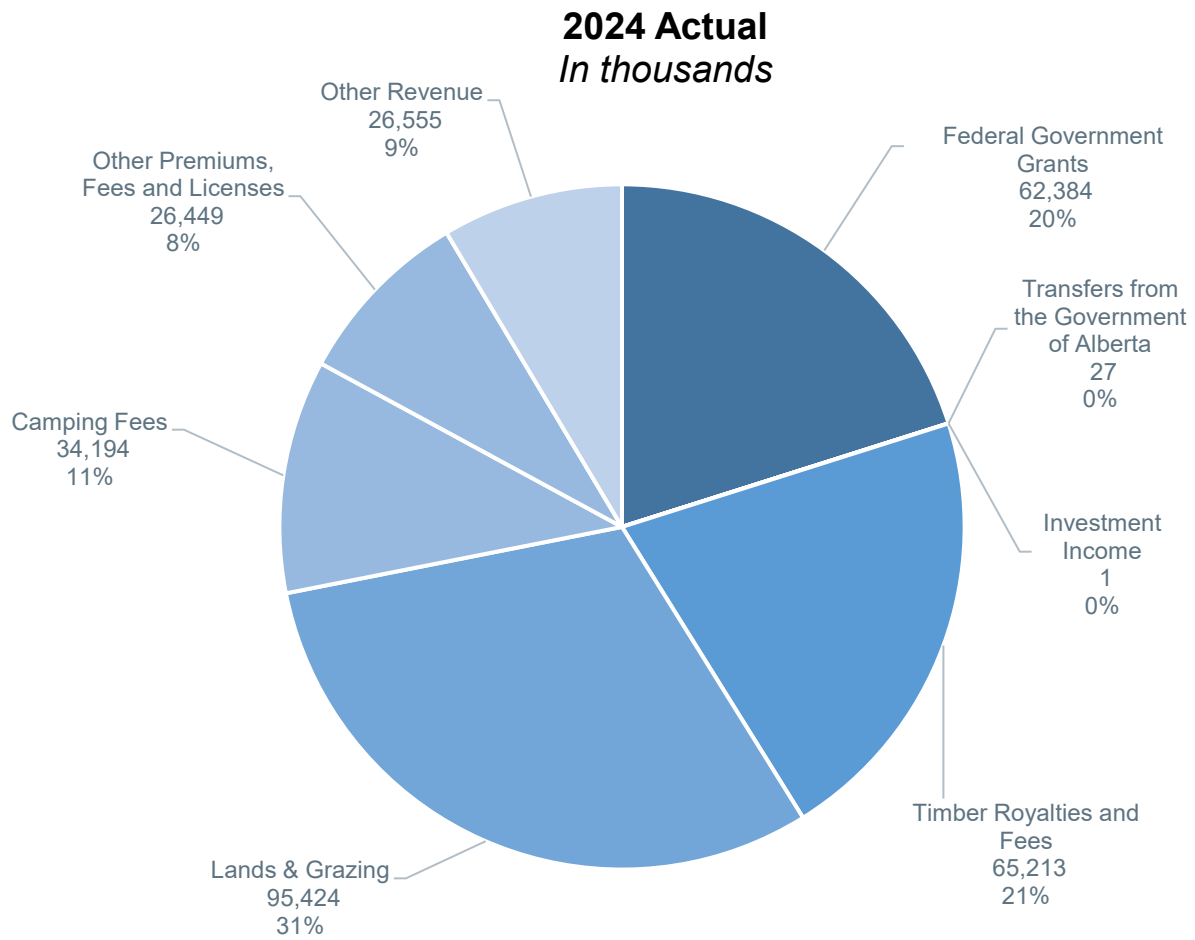
Breakdown of Revenues (unaudited)

	2024		2023
	Budget (Restated)	Actual	Actual (Restated)
	<i>In thousands</i>		
Government transfers			
Federal Government grants	\$ 25,911	\$ 62,384	\$ 19,422
Internal government transfers	-	27	-
	25,911	62,411	19,422
Investment income	-	1	13
	-	1	13
Premiums, fees and licenses			
Timber Royalties and Fees	158,719	65,213	146,296
Lands and Grazing	83,218	95,424	85,815
Camping Fees	31,700	34,194	34,350
Other	28,266	26,449	26,238
	301,903	221,280	292,699
Other revenue			
Other	13,617	26,555	12,961
	13,617	26,555	12,961
Total ministry revenues	\$ 341,431	\$ 310,247	\$ 325,095

Continued...

Breakdown of Revenues (unaudited)

The following information presents detailed revenues of the ministry. The objective of detailed revenues disclosure is to provide information that is useful in understanding and assessing the financial impact of government's revenue raising and for enhancing legislative control.



Expenses – Directly Incurred Detailed by Object (unaudited)

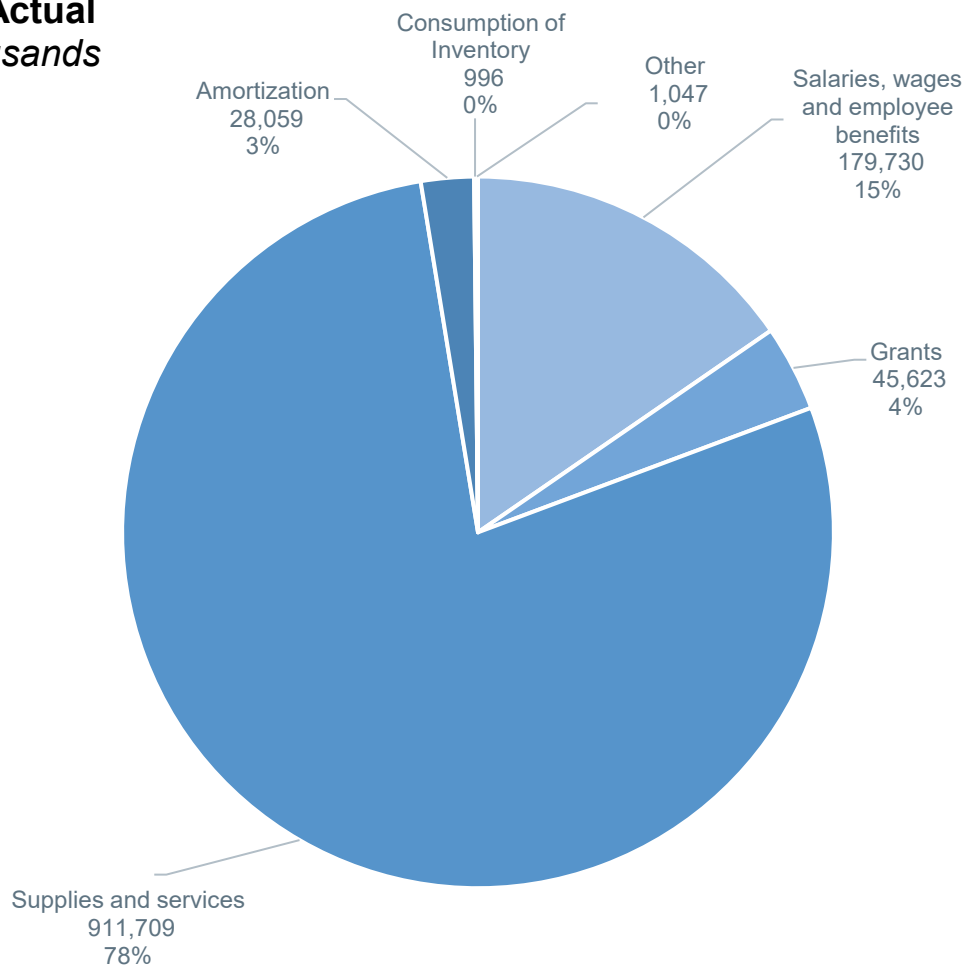
	2024		2023
	Budget (Restated)	Actual	Actual (Restated)
	<i>In thousands</i>		
Salaries, wages and employee benefits	\$ 151,029	\$ 179,730	\$ 146,896
Supplies and services	150,432	911,709	260,081
Grants	27,694	45,623	29,105
Amortization of tangible capital assets	37,893	28,059	31,754
Consumption of inventories of supplies	1,310	996	1,463
Other	66	1,047	551
Total ministry revenues	\$ 368,424	\$ 1,167,164	\$ 469,850

Continued...

Expenses – Directly Incurred Detailed by Object (unaudited)

The following information presents expenses of the ministry that were directly incurred by object. The objective of disclosure of expenses by object is to provide information that is useful in evaluating the economic impact of government acquiring or consuming various types of resources.

2024 Actual In thousands



Total expense was \$1.2 billion, \$798.7 million higher than budget and \$697.3 million higher than 2022-23, primarily due to higher costs resulting from an unprecedented extreme wildfire season:

- Salaries, wages and employment contracts were \$28.7 million higher than budget and \$32.8 million higher than the prior year for additional staffing requirements.
- Supplies and services were \$761.3 million higher than budget, and \$651.6 million higher than the prior year, for additional costs for wildland firefighting good and services, such as aircraft and heavy equipment contracts.
- Grants were \$17.9 million higher than budget and \$16.5 million higher than the previous year, for increased funding for community fireguard and other wildfire initiatives.
- Amortization was \$9.8 million less than budget and \$3.7 million less than the prior year due to delays in the completion of capital projects.

Supplemental Financial Information

Trust Funds under Administration

The ministry administers trust funds that are regulated and other funds consisting of public money over which the legislature has no power of appropriation. As the ministry has no equity in the funds and administers them for the purpose of various trusts, they are not included in the ministry's financial statements.

At March 31, 2024 trust funds under administration were as follows:

	2024	2023 <i>(Restated)</i>
	<i>In thousands</i>	
Performance Deposit Trust	\$ 551	\$ 728
Forests Act Securities Trust	5,305	6,081
Miscellaneous General Trust	34,098	33,466
Parks General Trust	2,851	2,742
	<u>\$ 42,805</u>	<u>\$ 43,017</u>

In addition to the above trust funds under administration, the ministry holds bank guarantees in the form of letters of credit as follows:

	2024	2023
	<i>In thousands</i>	
Letters of Credit	\$ 141,615	\$ 117,446
	<u>\$ 141,615</u>	<u>\$ 117,446</u>

Statement of Credit or Recovery (unaudited)

Department of Forestry and Parks

Year Ended March 31, 2024

In thousands

The following has been prepared pursuant to Section 24(3) of the *Financial Administration Act*.

	Authorized ⁽¹⁾	Actual Revenue Recognized	Unearned Revenue/Deferred Contributions	Total Revenue Received/Receivable	(Shortfall)/Excess ⁽¹⁾
EXPENSE AMOUNTS					
Parks Infrastructure Management	\$ 4,200	\$ 4,108	\$ -	\$ 4,108	\$ (92)
Parks Operations	50,300	50,003	353	50,356	56
Provincial Mapping	1,250	1,024	-	1,024	(226)
Hunting and Angling	7,906	8,081	-	8,081	175
Public Land Camping Fees	1,500	1,116	-	1,116	(384)
	<u>\$ 65,156</u>	<u>\$ 64,332</u>	<u>\$ 353</u>	<u>\$ 64,685</u>	<u>\$ (471)</u>

⁽¹⁾ Only expenditures are authorized.

Lapse/Encumbrance (unaudited)

Department of Forestry and Parks

Year Ended March 31, 2024

In thousands

	Restated Voted Estimate ⁽¹⁾	Supplementary Estimate ⁽²⁾	Adjustments ⁽³⁾	Adjusted Voted Estimate	Voted Actuals ⁽⁴⁾	Over Expended (Unexpended)
EXPENSE VOTE BY PROGRAM						
Ministry Support Services						
1.1 Minister's Office	\$ 877	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 877	\$ 764	\$ (113)
1.2 Deputy Minister's Office	764	-	-	764	758	(6)
1.3 Corporate Services	2,727	-	-	2,727	2,684	(43)
	<u>4,368</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,368</u>	<u>4,206</u>	<u>(162)</u>
Forests						
2.1 Wildfire Management	100,421	2,744	-	103,165	102,467	(698)
2.2 Forest Stewardship and Trade	69,637	(23,698)	-	45,939	25,925	(20,014)
2.3 Wildfire Presuppression and Response	-	45,973	-	45,973	58,111	12,138
	<u>170,058</u>	<u>25,019</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>195,077</u>	<u>186,503</u>	<u>(8,574)</u>
Parks						
3.1 Parks Operations	58,377	-	-	58,377	63,309	4,932
3.2 Parks Visitor Experience	10,207	-	-	10,207	12,962	2,755
3.3 Parks Conservation	6,083	-	-	6,083	3,355	(2,728)
3.4 Parks Public Safety and Security	2,411	-	-	2,411	1,237	(1,174)
3.5 Parks Infrastructure	11,133	1,500	-	12,633	9,102	(3,531)
	<u>88,211</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>89,711</u>	<u>89,965</u>	<u>254</u>
Lands						
4.1 Public Lands Operations	35,531	1,964	-	37,495	40,578	3,083
4.2 Rangeland Operations	6,933	-	-	6,933	7,937	1,004
	<u>42,464</u>	<u>1,964</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>44,428</u>	<u>48,515</u>	<u>4,087</u>
Hunting and Angling						
	13,290	-	400	13,690	12,785	(905)
	<u>13,290</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>400</u>	<u>13,690</u>	<u>12,785</u>	<u>(905)</u>
CAPITAL GRANTS						
Parks						
3.5 Parks Infrastructure	7,620	(3,360)	-	4,260	-	(4,260)
Lands						
4.1 Public Land Operations	3,210	(2,347)	-	863	863	-
	<u>10,830</u>	<u>(5,707)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,123</u>	<u>863</u>	<u>(4,260)</u>
Credit or Recovery Shortfall	-	-	(471)	(471)	-	471
Total	<u>\$ 329,221</u>	<u>\$ 22,776</u>	<u>\$ (71)</u>	<u>\$ 351,926</u>	<u>\$ 342,837</u>	<u>\$ (9,089)</u>
(Lapse)/Encumbrance						<u>\$ (9,089)</u>

Continued...

Financial Information

CAPITAL INVESTMENT VOTE BY PROGRAM

Forests						
2.1 Wildfire Management	10,583	-	-	10,583	9,636	(947)
	10,583	-	-	10,583	9,636	(947)
Parks						
3.5 Parks Infrastructure	63,496	-	3,981	67,477	59,682	(7,795)
	63,496	-	3,981	67,477	59,682	(7,795)
Lands						
4.1 Public Land Operations	6,600	-	-	6,600	4,917	(1,683)
4.2 Rangeland Operations	4,431	-	334	4,765	-	(4,765)
	11,031	-	334	11,365	4,917	(6,448)
Credit or Recovery (Shortfall)						
	-	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$ 85,110	\$ -	\$ 4,315	\$ 89,425	\$ 74,235	\$ (15,190)
(Lapse)/Encumbrance						\$ (15,190)

FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS VOTE BY PROGRAM

Forests						
2.1 Wildfire Management	\$ 1,310	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,310	\$ 303	\$ (1,007)
Total	\$ 1,310	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,310	\$ 303	\$ (1,007)
(Lapse)/Encumbrance						\$ (1,007)

CONTINGENCY ⁽²⁾

Forests						
2.3 Wildfire Presuppression and Response	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 793,027	\$ 793,027	\$ 793,027	\$ -
Contingency Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 793,027	\$ 793,027	\$ 793,027	\$ -
(Lapse)/Encumbrance						\$ -

(1) The Restated Voted Estimate column reflects the supply vote amounts provided to the department by the Designation and Transfer of Responsibility Regulations under Orders in Council (OC) 362/2022, OC 373/2022, 157/2023, and OC 167/2023 resulting from the government reorganizations announced in October 2022 and June 2023.

(2) Per the Supplementary Supply Estimates approved on March 28, 2024 through Bill 15 - Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2024.

(3) Adjustments include capital carry over amounts, transfers between votes, credit or recovery increases approved by Treasury Board and credit or recovery shortfalls. An encumbrance is incurred when, on a vote-by-vote basis, the total of actual disbursements in the prior year exceed the total adjusted estimate. All calculated encumbrances from the prior year are reflected as an adjustment to reduce the corresponding voted estimate in the current year.

Adjustments also include supply vote transfers for "Contingency" as approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council under the direction of the Minister of Finance. The Contingency supply vote consists of a provisional funding authority transferable to any ministry. Upon approval by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance may either spend or transfer all or a portion of this supply vote to another minister for public emergencies, disasters or unanticipated costs. As per OC 057/2024, contingency funding of \$793 million was approved for disaster response the 2023-24 wildfires.

(4) Actuals exclude non-voted amounts as no cash disbursement is required (non-cash amounts), or because the Legislative Assembly has already provided the funding authority pursuant to a statute other than an appropriation act. Non-cash amounts (such as amortization, accretion, valuation adjustments, and other provisions) are excluded as these amounts do not require any expenditure or payment of public money. Year-end expense accruals and payables which will immediately require a cash outlay (payment of public money) to settle or otherwise extinguish the liabilities are included in Actuals.

Payments Based on Agreements (unaudited)

Department of Forestry and Parks

Year Ended March 31, 2024

In thousands

The following has been prepared pursuant to Section 25(3) of the Financial Administration Act.

The Department has entered into agreements to deliver fire emergency services. Costs based on these agreements are incurred by the Department under the Mutual Aid Resource Sharing Agreement with other government organizations. Accounts receivable includes \$34,086 (2023: \$3,678) and accounts payable includes \$132 (2023: \$82) relating to payments under agreements.

Amounts paid and payable based on agreements with other government organizations are as follows:

	2024	2023
	<i>In thousands</i>	
United States	\$ 371	\$ -
Canadian Government	12,282	3,104
Other Provincial Jurisdictions	10,162	159
	<u>\$ 23,415</u>	<u>\$ 3,263</u>

Annual Report Extracts and Other Statutory Reports

Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act

Section 32 of the *Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act* reads:

- 32(1) Every chief officer must prepare a report annually on all disclosures that have been made to the designated officer of the department, public entity or office of the Legislature for which the chief officer is responsible.
- (2) The report under subsection (1) must include the following information:
- (a) the number of disclosures received by the designated officer, the number of disclosures acted on and the number of disclosures not acted on by the designated officer;
 - (b) the number of investigations commenced by the designated officer as a result of disclosures;
 - (c) in the case of an investigation that results in a finding of wrongdoing, a description of the wrongdoing and any recommendations made or corrective measures taken in relation to the wrongdoing or the reasons why no corrective measure was taken.
- (3) The report under subsection (1) must be included in the annual report of the department, public entity or office of the Legislature if the annual report is made publicly available.

There was one disclosure of wrongdoing filed with the designated officer between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024. After reviewing the disclosure, it was determined an investigation was not warranted and the file was closed.