

BUDGET 2023

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA | 2023-26

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# Ministry Business Plan Environment and Protected Areas

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# Environment and Protected Areas

## Business Plan 2023-26

### Ministry Fact Sheet – Mandate and Structure

The Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas works to protect and enhance the environment and ecosystems throughout the province to secure a sustainable future with Alberta as a leader in environmental conservation and protection supporting economic prosperity and quality of life for Albertans. The ministry has implemented a common sense, made in Alberta approach to managing provincial Crown land that better meets the needs of communities, Indigenous Peoples, and job creators without compromising conservation values and recreational opportunities. The Alberta Crown Land Vision outlines the ministry's approach for the continued conservation of Crown land and biodiversity to ensure land uses are sustainable into the future. Environment and ecosystem health and integrity are indispensable to the safety and well-being of Albertans. Achieving this requires the ministry to leverage effective consultation, engagement, collaboration, and partnerships to implement the Alberta Crown Land Vision, regional and sub-regional land use plans, environmental management frameworks, and complementary strategies to support the protection and recovery of species at risk, the wise and sustainable use of fish and wildlife, and habitat conservation.

The Office of the Chief Scientist provides Albertans and the ministry with expert environmental science knowledge, research, and advice to address the complex environmental challenges and opportunities facing Alberta. The Office provides scientific oversight of Alberta's Environmental Science Program providing data and reports on the condition of Alberta's environment. The Office promotes scientific excellence and integrity using an evidence-based risk informed approach, inclusive of Indigenous knowledge, citizen science and community-based monitoring, and a credible provincial environmental science program to inform ministry quality decision making. Consultation, engagement and the best available scientific, local and Indigenous knowledge informs relevant, efficient and environmentally focused legislation, standards, and policy. Under its continued leadership, the ministry delivers the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Fund, and provides certainty and stability for investment into large emission reducing projects while maintaining industry competitiveness. Funding is provided for the Land Use Secretariat and the Integrated Resource Management Secretariat for cross-ministry integration and collaboration in policy development and the development, review, and amendment of regional and sub-regional and issue-specific land use plans. The ministry also supports the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Secretariat as a strategic and coordinating body for all ESG-related activities across the Government of Alberta, including the adoption of a standardized jurisdictional ESG framework to enable transparent, comparable jurisdictional assessments and to enhance Alberta's reputation and investors' confidence in investing.

A well-functioning environmental regulatory system is essential to Alberta's economy and future investment. The ministry is eliminating unnecessary regulatory requirements to improve the government service experience for Albertans. Responding to stakeholder concerns of a slow, out-dated and confusing system, the ministry is leading the Regulatory Transformation Project (RTP) which through innovation and modernization is making the ministry a leader in regulatory assurance. Alberta's system supports community and economic development while maintaining high-quality environmental health in Alberta through legislation, policies and plans. The RTP consists of the Regulatory Assurance Framework, the system's business processes foundation, and the Digital Regulatory Assurance System (DRAS), the system's digital backbone. DRAS releases 1 and 2 are complete with five more releases planned over the next three years. The system will provide outcomes-based approaches to decisions, be impartial, transparent and agile with clear accountability, a common risk management framework and enhanced stakeholder awareness.

The ministry works with the Ministry of Forestry, Parks and Tourism, Indigenous communities and stakeholders to integrate environmental conservation and stewardship, with recreational access where appropriate, and ensures treaty and Indigenous rights are respected. Collaboration with other ministries, partner agencies, strategic partnerships and municipalities protects Albertans from the adverse effects of environmental conditions and events and develops key environmental solutions for our province. In collaboration with municipalities, the ministry supports responses to

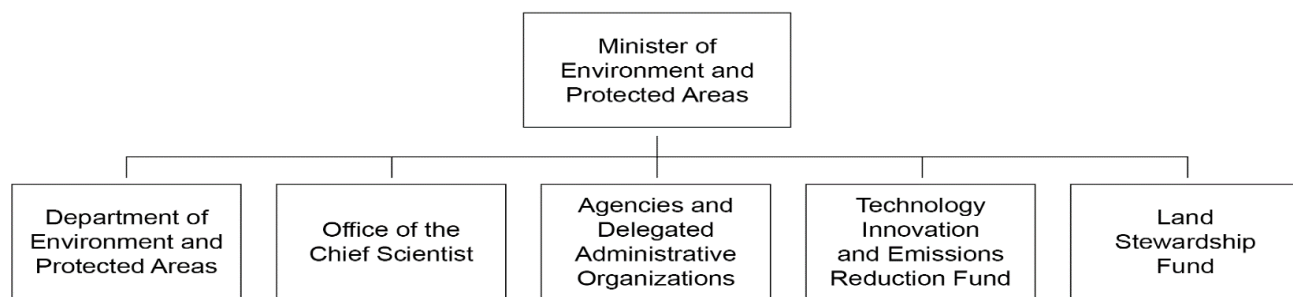
environmental emergencies and strengthens environmental resilience and adaptation to a changing climate while also developing comprehensive response plans and programs.

The ministry supports Alberta’s sustainable economic development, including job creation opportunities for the economic well-being and quality of life Albertans desire within environmental capacity. Alberta, a resource-based economy that contributes significantly to Canada’s economic well-being, continues to take considered actions to develop a made-in-Alberta climate strategy to explore actions to reduce emissions while contributing to other key and often overlooked elements related to a changing climate, like national and global energy security, the energy transition and food security. The Alberta climate strategy will build on previous leadership and action to create a plan to help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions by working collaboratively with industrial emitters and investing in innovation and the practical application of technology through the Technology, Innovation and Emissions Reduction system. The ministry will work with Alberta Energy to assess the province’s carbon sink capacity and support emissions reduction strategies that encourage technological innovation and higher-emitting fuel replacement in Asia with environmentally responsible Alberta energy. The ministry’s work with Public Safety and Emergency Services will develop a flood mitigation strategy to proactively protect Alberta communities at risk of future natural disasters.

Through a collaborative approach to environmental stewardship, the ministry provides direction and regulates access, allocation and use of natural resources through planning, policy, and regulatory assurance. Balancing environmental, economic and social considerations to attain desired outcomes creates inherent complexity and exposure to other risk drivers of competing mandates, increasing the need for system governance and strong leadership and coordination. Competing mandates within the ministry and with other ministries, can impact decision making. Coordination and collaboration between the ministry, partner agencies, and stakeholders are key for effective planning and implementation. Addressing these drivers effectively will reduce risk and enhance successful implementation.

The ministry administers several grant programs that provide funding to our partners and support the economy by creating jobs to achieve the outcomes important to Albertans. The Rangeland Sustainability Program, Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program and the Land Trust Grant Program help conserve and restore critically important habitat, mitigate future disaster events, enable innovative research, and support engagement opportunities. Under the Alberta Wetland Policy and the Wetland Replacement Program, the ministry works with non profit organizations and municipalities to replace wetlands and prioritize work in areas of the highest wetland loss. Sustainable management of the province’s fish and wildlife populations ensures conservation, Indigenous, recreational, economic, and social well-being uses for residents and visitors are available. The ministry administers the Land Stewardship Fund to maintain large tracts of native landscapes, conserve connecting corridors for biodiversity, and sustain disconnected pockets of native habitats within fragmented landscapes. The ministry is supported by more than 20 public agencies and delegated administrative organizations (DAOs) that conduct work on behalf of or provide advice to the government. Information on these public agencies and DAOs is available at [www.alberta.ca/public-agency-list.cfm](http://www.alberta.ca/public-agency-list.cfm).

A more detailed description of Environment and Protected Areas and its programs and initiatives can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/environment-and-protected-areas.aspx>.



The Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas remains committed to regulatory approaches and program delivery that reduce unnecessary government oversight and emphasizes outcomes, in order to improve access to government services, attract investment, support innovation and competitiveness, and grow Alberta businesses.

Ministry business plans should be considered in conjunction with all budget documents - including the Fiscal Plan, Government Strategic Plan, and Estimates - which work together to provide a complete overview of government’s commitment to responsible fiscal management.

# 2023-26 Business Plan

## Outcome 1

### Environment and ecosystem health and integrity are vital to Albertans' well-being and safety

Alberta's environment and ecosystem health and integrity are the foundation for Alberta's economic prosperity and positively contribute to both human health and quality of life. Leadership and effective consultation, collaboration and partnerships in land use plans, and environmental frameworks and strategies combined with appropriate data collection and interpretation, guide the ministry's efforts and commitments. Environment and Protected Areas works with other ministries and agencies to protect Albertans from the adverse effects of environmental conditions and events.

### Key Objectives

- 1.1 Balance environmental, economic and social interests through integrated policy development, and land and environmental planning (land-use plans, management frameworks, programs, agreements, biodiversity planning) with effective legislation, regulation and processes while maintaining robust environmental standards and safety.
- 1.2 Maintain and strengthen environmental resource stewardship and conservation through proactive engagement and partnerships with municipalities, non profit organizations, and Indigenous communities to support targeted strategies and frameworks including conservation programs, Alberta's Clean Air Strategy and Water for Life Strategy, and efficient regulated waste facilities and recycling programs.
- 1.3 Continue delivering scientifically based ambient environmental condition monitoring, evaluation, and reporting with partners to support environment and resource stewardship and Albertans' safety.
- 1.4 Continue the protection, conservation and sustainable management of fish and wildlife to enable Indigenous use as well as recreational angling and hunting opportunities.
- 1.5 Support development of a flood mitigation strategy and work to mitigate the adverse effects of flood and drought; and contribute to water management flexibility.
- 1.6 Prevent the entry of invasive species into Alberta and implement rapid response measures to mitigate impacts if invasive species are detected.

### Initiatives Supporting Key Objectives

- \$11 million allocated to support strategic partnerships in the shared stewardship of air, water, land, and biodiversity in 2023-2024.
- \$15.5 million is allocated for land-use planning and stewardship tools in 2023-24.
- \$22.4 million is allocated to conservation programs including \$10 million from the Land Stewardship Fund in 2023-24.
- \$50 million in dedicated revenue is provided by industry to support the multi-stakeholder Oil Sands Monitoring Program.
- \$65.4 million is allocated to effectively anticipate, respond to and mitigate the impact of environmental conditions and events including floods, droughts and invasive species.
- \$49 million is allocated to the provincial fish stocking program in 2023-24 to improve angling opportunities.

## Performance Metrics

### 1.a Performance Measure: Legacy industrial footprint in caribou range receiving restoration treatment – under development

Reports on the amount of legacy footprint in caribou range(s) receiving restoration treatment during the past year. Restoration of boreal ecosystems contribute to carbon sequestering, conservation of biodiversity, and provides habitats that support species populations and provide ecosystem services.

### 1.b Performance Indicator: Percentage of vertebrate species designated as ‘at risk’.

The species at risk results provide an important indication of the state of ecological integrity, biodiversity on the landscape and ecosystem health. Species more sensitive to change can exhibit population decreases that can have cascading impacts on other species and ecosystem components and services, therefore signaling when special management and recovery actions are necessary.

|   | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| Per cent of vertebrate species designated at-risk | 3.4  | 3.7  | 4.2  | 3.9  |

## Outcome 2

### Sustainable economic development is achieved within environmental capacity

For Alberta, a resource-based economy, to have sustainable economic development that offers Albertans job creation opportunities and the quality of life they desire, responsible development needs to occur within the environment’s capacity. Environment and Protected Areas continues to work to balance interrelated environment, economy, and social needs.

### Key Objectives

- 2.1 Develop and coordinate Alberta’s government-wide Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategy to showcase Alberta as an ESG leader; including a standardized jurisdictional ESG framework to enable transparent comparable jurisdictional assessments.
- 2.2 Complete social-economic impact assessments for all major environmental protection proposals and implement designated industrial zones to enhance investor confidence.
- 2.3 Continue implementation of the regulatory system transformation to enhance administrative and regulatory efficiency and effectiveness.
- 2.4 Implement a made-in-Alberta climate strategy with provincial measures such as emissions reduction strategies, nature-based carbon sequestration solutions, and the Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction (TIER) system to encourage technological innovation while advancing our understanding of climate change and its impacts.
- 2.5 Develop a conservation and biodiversity management strategy that supports a range of land uses and conservation outcomes while balancing economic recreation and tourism opportunities.
- 2.6 Address reclamation and remediation responsibilities through effective liability management, reclamation and remediation policies, and business processes such as collecting reclamation security, improving reclamation guidance, and certificate issuance.
- 2.7 Continue reviewing existing land use plans and establishing new land use plans responsive to a broad range of land uses that support environmental and conservation outcomes, Indigenous traditional use, recreation, and economic development.

### Initiatives Supporting Key Objectives

- In 2023-24, \$208.6 million derived from TIER system is allocated to support investments in innovation and technology in Alberta.
- \$35.9 million is allocated for caribou recovery planning and actions in 2023-24.
- \$7.1 million is allocated to continue the digital regulatory assurance system build as part of the regulatory system transformation to enhance administrative and regulatory efficiency and effectiveness in 2023-24.
- \$2.5 million is allocated to the designated industrial zone pilot in 2023-24 which will reduce red tape and streamline regulatory approvals to help attract new investment and job creation for Albertans.

## Performance Metrics

### 2.a Performance Measure: Percentage of provincially priced greenhouse gas emissions.

Pricing of greenhouse gas emissions through provincial regulation furthers responsible and sustainable economic development in Alberta by providing a financial incentive to lower greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. Last actuals (2020) were 60 per cent.

| Targets | 2023-24 | 61% | 2024-25 | 61% | 2025-26 | 61% |
|---------|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|
|---------|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|

### 2.b Performance Indicator: Electricity greenhouse gas emissions intensity.

Tracking Alberta's electricity systems emissions intensity helps to determine how the industrial emissions pathway is being altered as a result of policy and legislation, in particular, the pricing of carbon from large industrial emitters.

|  | 2016       | 2017       | 2018        | 2019       | 2020       |
|--|------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|
|  | 760 kg/MWh | 760 kg/MWh | 640 kg/ MWh | 630 kg/MWh | 590 kg/MWh |

### 2.c Performance Indicator: Oil sands greenhouse gas production emissions intensity.

The oil sands represent a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions in Alberta. Tracking oil sands emissions intensity helps to assess the effectiveness of climate change policy and legislation.

|                              | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  | 2019  |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| In situ                      | 0.439 | 0.426 | 0.425 | 0.438 | 0.445 |
| Mined                        | 0.234 | 0.237 | 0.268 | 0.218 | 0.215 |
| Mine with Integrated Upgrade | 0.504 | 0.468 | 0.470 | 0.462 | 0.451 |

### 2.d Performance Indicator: Percentage of interior habitat in Alberta.

Interior habitat is an important aspect of habitat quality and long-term monitoring of interior habitat provides valuable information for policy decisions in Alberta when considered in conjunction with restoration efforts. Interior habitat is essential for ensuring the maintenance of biodiversity and healthy, functioning ecosystems. Data is collected every two years and when the 2020 and 2022 Human Footprint Inventory data is available the performance indicator will be updated.

|          | 2010  | 2012 | 2014  | 2016  | 2018  |
|----------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| Per cent | 41.6% | N/A  | 40.6% | 40.1% | 39.6% |

### 2.e Performance Indicator\*: Percentage of ministries utilizing the ESG Secretariat for data and narrative that showcases Alberta's performance and ambition across the full spectrum of ESG – under development

The utilization of ESG data and narrative by departments ensures consistency in a compelling and unified message, and utilization will be measured by direct engagements on key initiatives.

\*Indicator is new as the ESG secretariat was newly established as a division of Environment and Protected Areas January 2023

## STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

| (thousands of dollars)                             | Comparable        |                     | <b>2023-24<br/>Estimate</b> | 2024-25<br>Target | 2025-26<br>Target |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|  | 2022-23<br>Budget | 2022-23<br>Forecast |                             |                   |                   |
| <b>REVENUE</b>                                     |                   |                     |                             |                   |                   |
| Transfers from Government of Canada                | 84,164            | 103,740             | <b>45,363</b>               | 10,656            | 15,548            |
| Investment Income                                  | 913               | 7,390               | <b>7,925</b>                | 5,553             | 5,599             |
| Premiums, Fees and Licences                        | 9,382             | 9,656               | <b>10,666</b>               | 10,626            | 10,656            |
| Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Fund | 420,000           | 630,500             | <b>516,000</b>              | 558,000           | 298,000           |
| Other Revenue                                      | 68,961            | 75,849              | <b>68,013</b>               | 68,013            | 68,013            |
| Ministry Total                                     | 583,420           | 827,135             | <b>647,967</b>              | 652,848           | 397,816           |
| Inter-Ministry Consolidation Adjustment            | (11,830)          | (11,830)            | <b>(11,830)</b>             | (11,830)          | (11,830)          |
| Consolidated Total                                 | 571,590           | 815,305             | <b>636,137</b>              | 641,018           | 385,986           |
| <b>EXPENSE</b>                                     |                   |                     |                             |                   |                   |
| Ministry Support Services                          | 24,900            | 23,386              | <b>23,843</b>               | 23,975            | 23,979            |
| Air  | 12,729            | 13,681              | <b>13,037</b>               | 13,134            | 13,134            |
| Land   | 38,270            | 38,270              | <b>32,837</b>               | 32,489            | 31,013            |
| Water  | 88,407            | 90,610              | <b>98,592</b>               | 53,605            | 53,611            |
| Fish and Wildlife                                  | 42,914            | 48,751              | <b>69,987</b>               | 53,206            | 58,180            |
| Integrated Planning                                | 34,637            | 53,628              | <b>35,300</b>               | 35,294            | 35,768            |
| Land Use Secretariat                               | 5,008             | 5,008               | <b>5,046</b>                | 5,058             | 5,058             |
| Science and Monitoring                             | 70,154            | 69,350              | <b>70,569</b>               | 70,841            | 71,012            |
| Emissions Management                               | 137,541           | 172,245             | <b>209,431</b>              | 216,486           | 70,341            |
| Quasi-Judicial Bodies                              | 6,957             | 21,176              | <b>7,753</b>                | 7,803             | 7,803             |
| Ministry Total                                     | 461,517           | 536,105             | <b>566,395</b>              | 511,891           | 369,899           |
| Inter-Ministry Consolidation Adjustment            | (12,825)          | (12,825)            | <b>(12,825)</b>             | (12,825)          | (12,825)          |
| Consolidated Total                                 | 448,692           | 523,280             | <b>553,570</b>              | 499,066           | 357,074           |
| Net Operating Result                               | 122,898           | 292,025             | <b>82,567</b>               | 141,952           | 28,912            |
| <b>CAPITAL INVESTMENT</b>                          |                   |                     |                             |                   |                   |
| Ministry Support Services                          | 425               | 897                 | <b>425</b>                  | 425               | 425               |
| Air  | 1,306             | -                   | <b>392</b>                  | -                 | -                 |
| Land   | 5,602             | 6,690               | <b>5,602</b>                | 5,602             | 5,602             |
| Water  | 6,000             | 5,022               | <b>8,701</b>                | -                 | -                 |
| Fish and Wildlife                                  | 31,443            | 8,449               | <b>38,876</b>               | 19,112            | 3,214             |
| Integrated Planning                                | -                 | -                   | <b>2,500</b>                | 900               | 300               |
| Science and Monitoring                             | 3,000             | 7,441               | <b>2,900</b>                | 1,600             | 1,000             |
| Quasi-Judicial Bodies                              | 17                | 17                  | <b>17</b>                   | 17                | 17                |
| Consolidated Total                                 | 47,793            | 28,516              | <b>59,413</b>               | 27,656            | 10,558            |