

APRIL 2023

EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGION ECONOMIC RECOVERY WORKING GROUP (EMRER)

PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS



Presented to: Government of Alberta

Presented on behalf of EMRER by:

Chair

Searle Turton, MLA for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain

Co- Vice Chairs

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TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The *Edmonton Metropolitan Region Economic Recovery Working Group* acknowledges that the traditional land on which our communities and businesses reside is in Treaty Six Territory. We would like to thank the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, including the Nêhiyawak/Cree, Denesuliné/Dene, Anishinaabe/Saulteaux, Nakota Isga/Nakota Sioux, and Niitsitapi/Blackfoot peoples. We further acknowledge this territory as the Métis homeland and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel.



LETTER FROM CHAIR AND CO-VICE CHAIRS

The COVID-19 pandemic, worldwide economic recession and energy price collapse created economic turmoil and strong headwinds in Alberta. Edmonton’s Metropolitan Region also felt the impact of these global events. Families faced new challenges, workers were laid off, businesses downsized or closed their doors, and the social and cultural fabric of our communities was frayed .

In the face of these challenges, the Edmonton Metropolitan Region showed that it is strong, diverse, and resilient. It continues to be the heart of Alberta’s petrochemical supply and service industries and acts as a vital link to Canada's northern communities through rail, road and air. The region’s diverse economy is anchored by its strengths in manufacturing and technology. Much of the significant growth witnessed in the technology sector is due to the region’s advantage as one of Canada’s premier research and education centres. The Edmonton Metropolitan Region is more than just a great place to work and innovate, it is also a great place to live and raise a family. Our diverse communities play host to internationally recognized sports, arts and cultural events. Edmonton’s International Fringe Festival is second only to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in size worldwide and is the largest of its kind in North America.

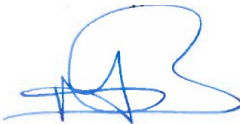
The Edmonton Metropolitan Region Economic Recovery (EMRER) Working Group believes that collaboration is key as we ‘build back stronger’ in the face of adversity. We agree that we must not lose sight of our powerful community, cultural and economic foundations. Engagement with local champions and Indigenous leaders will be vital as the region renews and reinvigorates itself.

It is an honour to present the recommendations outlined in this action plan on behalf of a group of experts in industries and communities vital to the economic success of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region. The EMRER working group thoughtfully puts forward this plan to increase collaboration between stakeholders in this region and the Government of Alberta on key areas that we know will bolster Alberta’s economic future. At first glance this is an action plan from and for the Edmonton Metropolitan Region, but really it is a plan for Alberta’s economy that recognizes our region as an economic driver, partner, and innovator.

We are humbled by the dedication of the working group members, and we remain committed to seeing this action plan realized by the Government of Alberta and regional stakeholders because, ultimately, our economic future is brighter if we work together.



Chair
Searle Turton, MLA
Spruce Grove-Stony Plain



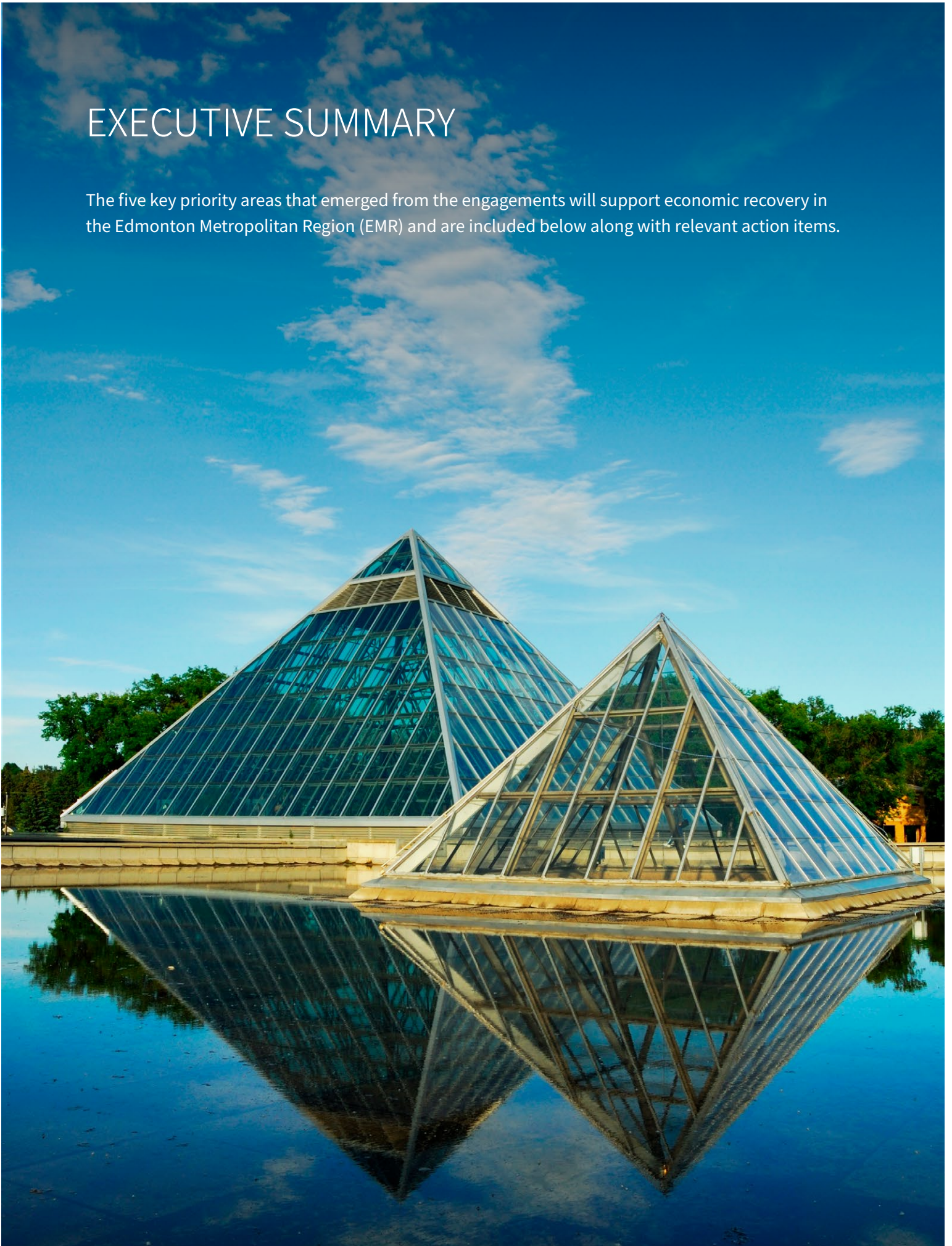
Co-chair
Malcom Bruce, CEO
Edmonton Global



Co-chair
Lisa Baroldi, President & CEO
BOMA Edmonton

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The five key priority areas that emerged from the engagements will support economic recovery in the Edmonton Metropolitan Region (EMR) and are included below along with relevant action items.



Working Group Priorities

As a result of engagement with key stakeholders, the working group identified five key priorities for supporting economic recovery in the Edmonton Metropolitan Region (EMR).



Priority 1: Economic diversification

Enhance the economic competitiveness of the EMR by creating opportunities in technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, and investment.

Opportunity 1.1: Capitalize on the region's hydrogen assets

- Action: Explore ways to incentivize demand for hydrogen.

Opportunity 1.2: Lead innovation in artificial intelligence

- Action: Create a tax credit to encourage growth of the industry.

Opportunity 1.3: Invest in life sciences and pharmaceutical infrastructure

- Action: Build out lab infrastructure.
- Action: Create a life science accelerator.

Opportunity 1.4: Increase mines and minerals processing capacity

- Action: Increase investment to the University of Alberta for research into the exploration and processing of mines and minerals.



Priority 2: Talent retention and attraction

By investing in our people and industries, and building pride in our communities, Alberta will continue to attract and retain top talent from around the world.

Opportunity 2.1: Provide access to high-quality education institutions

- Action: Increase accessibility of post-secondary opportunities for Albertans through increased enrolment expansion funding, tuition grants, and micro-credentialing for programs that train students for employment in industries facing labour shortages.

Opportunity 2.2: Attract and retain top talent into the Edmonton Metropolitan Region

- Action: Collaborate with post-secondary institutions, municipalities, businesses, and industry associations on initiatives to help attract and retain graduates.



Priority 3: Investment attraction and marketing

Address policy, infrastructure, and market access needs while clearly communicating the EMR's competitive advantages and assets around the world.

Opportunity 3.1: Lower the cost of utilities

- Action: The Government of Alberta should develop a framework with utility providers to "impair" overbuilt assets that are not in production - and compensate in kind - until such time as market demand warrants they come back online.

Opportunity 3.2: Establish special economic zones

- Action: Establish Special Economic Zones for industrial real estate development supported by an accelerated regulatory process and a 10-year fund so businesses and municipalities can develop readily available industrial lands.

Opportunity 3.3: Expand market access

- Action: Government of Alberta should contribute \$10M per year over five years, for a total of \$50M, to the Regional Air Services Opportunity Fund, to drive further growth for the regional economy by improving access to international markets in the second fastest growing region in Canada.

Opportunity 3.4: Market the region

- Action: Contribute \$10M to a marketing fund to be used by Edmonton Global and potentially others (e.g., Explore Edmonton) to market the region over the next three years both nationally and globally.



Priority 4: Indigenous economic sovereignty

Catalyze initiatives with a mission to support Indigenous prosperity and economic self-determination that will benefit Indigenous communities, businesses, and the region as a whole.

Opportunity 4.1: Enable bold and inclusive Indigenous-led economic development

- Action: Invest in a multi-year Indigenous-led Economic Development and Investment Strategy with \$500 million+ funding accessible to communities, organizations, and companies.

Opportunity 4.2: Support Indigenous entrepreneurship

- Action: Match the capital that Indigenous-run organizations provide to Indigenous entrepreneurs and increase funding for capacity building for Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Opportunity 4.3: Enhance Indigenous procurement opportunities

- Action: Establish an Indigenous-led Procurement Advisory Committee with the goal of creating an Indigenous Procurement Policy for the Government of Alberta.

Opportunity 4.4: Increase Indigenous representation

- Action: Create a mandatory minimum requirement of Indigenous representation on Government of Alberta public agencies, boards, and commissions.



Priority 5: Downtown vibrancy and social supports

Support urban revitalization, infrastructure and social supports, and business growth to enable a safe and thriving downtown core in Edmonton. Recognize the importance of the downtown core to the regional economy.

Opportunity 5.1: Introduce funding and incentives to bring more people to the core

- Action: Residential construction grant (per door) focused on increasing the downtown population.
- Action: Invest in government-owned buildings and provide other incentives to get provincial employees back in the office.

Opportunity 5.2: Accelerate downtown beautification initiatives

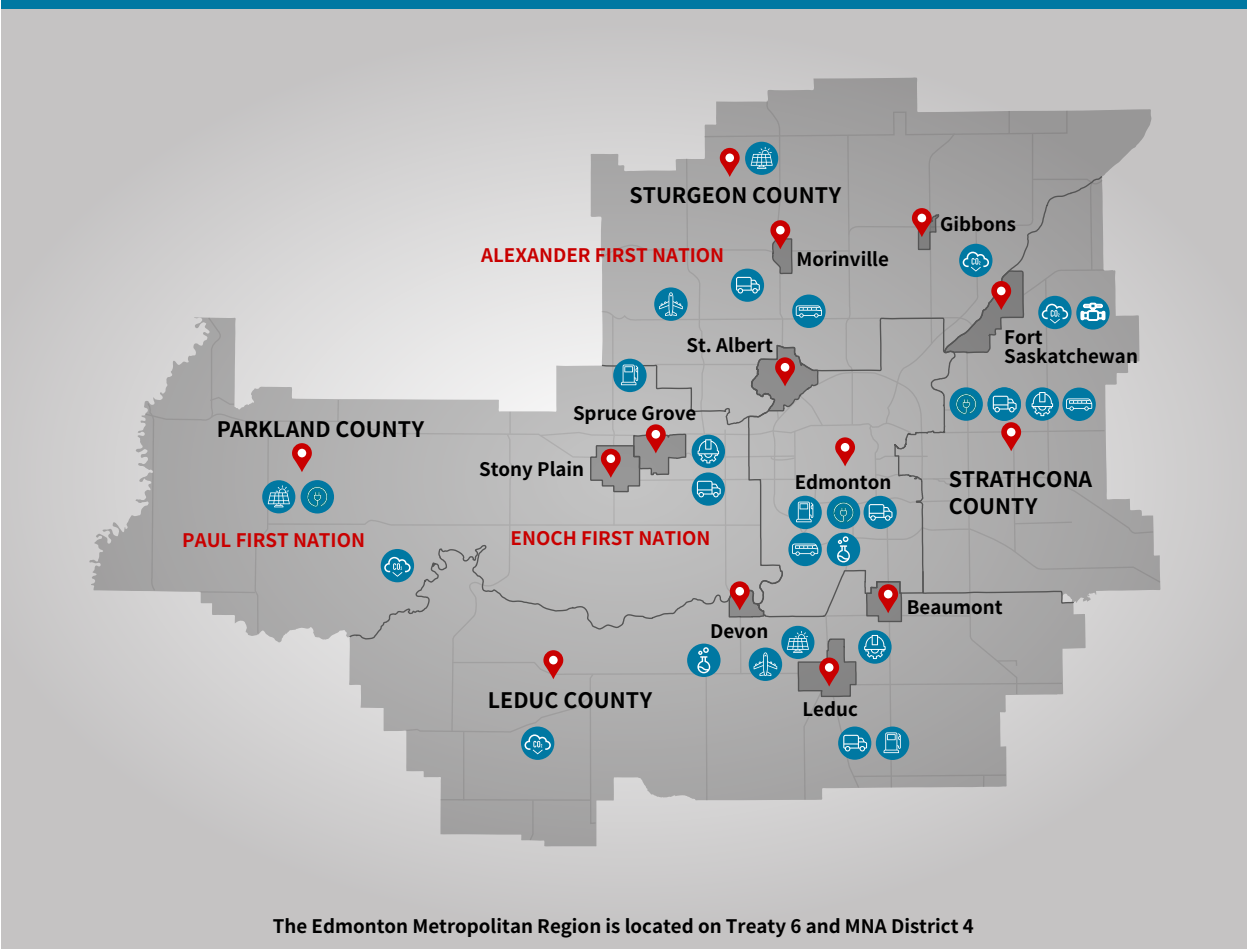
- Action: Provide matching grants for private and public investments in downtown infrastructure improvements (sidewalks, roads, trees, street furniture, and other beautification initiatives).

Opportunity 5.3: Increase mental health and addictions supports

- Action: Provide funding for respite and addiction treatment centres, as well as programs with demonstrated success in supporting people with mental health and addiction issues.

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of external subject matter experts and do not represent positions or policy direction on behalf of the Government of Alberta.

Edmonton Metropolitan Region



Power Generation	Maintenance	Aviation	H2 Blending
CCUS	Bus Fleets	Solar (Green H2)	
Trucking	Research	Hydrogen Fueling Stations	

BACKGROUND



The Edmonton Metropolitan Region (EMR) is a significant contributor to the Alberta economy representing 30 per cent of the province's GDP. The region is on the brink of significant economic growth having secured a place at the forefront of new technology such as hydrogen, artificial intelligence, and pharmaceuticals. This only complements the existing key industries, including energy, agriculture, and higher education. More than just the City of Edmonton itself, the regional economy stretches from the edges of Parkland County in the west to the Alberta Industrial Heartland in the northeast, all the way down to the Edmonton International Airport and Leduc County in the south, and everything in between. Each of these areas is key to the economic success of the region as a whole, with all benefiting from that success.

The EMR has one of the youngest populations in Canada, with some of the highest labour force participation rates. It offers numerous lifestyle advantages and is a place where young people have opportunities to reach both their career and personal goals. It is an innovative region, with new technology being developed every day that has positive results both locally and all over the world.

In February 2022, the former Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation established the Edmonton Metro Region working group. The goals of the working group were to determine policies the provincial government could look at to enhance this growth. The EMR is set up for success moving into the future, and provincial involvement can only boost this growth. The former minister asked for a mix of actionable and visionary recommendations.

The working group members came from a broad range of industries representing the diversity that exists in the regional economy. The members were deliberately chosen as they are key leaders in their various fields and are members of key economic sectors that are important to the growth of the region.

Through meeting with various stakeholders and deliberation, a number of key priorities emerged that guided the recommendations that the working group put forward. The five key priorities encompassed feedback received by stakeholders and key players in the region. Through these five priorities, the working group was able to determine a number of important action items.

These recommendations help set the stage for how the province can contribute to the success of the EMR, both for the economy of today, and for future generations.

PRIORITIES AND SUGGESTED ACTIONS





Priority 1: Economic diversification

Creating and supporting a diverse ecosystem of technology, business, and investment opportunities will help ensure economic competitiveness of the EMR and provide a stable path forward for growth and development. Long-term strategies focused on sector-specific grants, job creation, and innovation incentives, all of which will be necessary to realize opportunities in the EMR.

Opportunity 1.1: Capitalize on the region's hydrogen assets

Canada's first hydrogen hub, located in the Edmonton region, is one of the largest in the world. It has been able to attract investments in innovation, production, and new technologies due to its ability to produce low-cost, low-carbon hydrogen on a global scale.¹

Action: Explore ways to incentivize demand for hydrogen.

- The provincial Hydrogen Roadmap includes a clear action plan for moving hydrogen production forward. Currently, the hydrogen economy is limited due to lower demand; however, it is expected the need for hydrogen as an energy source will increase over time. It is important that government look at ways to incentivize demand now in order to help grow the industry.
- An example from the EMR is the Edmonton International Airport incentivizing hydrogen by increasing their hydrogen vehicle fleet, installing hydrogen charging stations, and new partnerships with hydrogen companies.

Opportunity 1.2: Lead innovation in artificial intelligence

The Faculty of Science at the University of Alberta leads some of the top artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) research in the world. The EMR also has a presence from many AI companies including Google Deepmind, AltaML, and Vibrome, ensuring the region is well-positioned to emerge as a leader in this space.

Action: Create a tax credit to encourage growth of the industry.

- Tax credits are an important policy choice that could be used to encourage technology growth in this sector and other technology sectors, such as Interactive Digital Media.
- Incentivizing investments through tax credits ensures that Alberta-based companies can remain competitive, hire more workers, and increase local investment.
- A targeted incentive program shows foreign investors that the Alberta government is prioritizing their investment and welcoming their presence to Alberta.

¹ Source: Edmonton Global: [Edmonton Region: A Global Epicenter for Hydrogen - Edmonton Global](#)

Opportunity 1.3: Invest in life sciences and pharmaceutical infrastructure

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased focus in the world on the importance of pharmaceutical products, and the need to invest in research, development, and manufacturing activities in this sector. Key investments from the Alberta government will help ensure this growth happens in the EMR. The region is home to 60 per cent of Alberta's life science companies, which contribute to 7.5 per cent of the region's GDP and represent prime opportunities for increased international investment. This was highlighted as a key growth industry through discussions at the working group table.

Action: Build out lab infrastructure.

- Many companies require labs; however, construction can be costly. Once built, labs provide the opportunity for companies to stay and grow in the EMR. Companies may then take the next step of investing in construction of large-scale facilities.

Action: Create a life science accelerator.

- Expertise in health and life sciences is a core component of the region's thriving economy. In addition to a high concentration of top-notch facilities, research, and development (R&D) institutions, a startup accelerator will continue to attract some of the world's leading life science experts and investors.²

Opportunity 1.4: Increase mines and minerals processing capacity

Edmonton is home to one of Canada's largest mineral processing facilities. This facility serves as a manufacturing base and gateway to the North for import and export of minerals, which differentiates the EMR from other regions in the province.

Action: Increase investment to the University of Alberta for research into the exploration and processing of mines and minerals.

- The University of Alberta is leading world-class research into the development and commercialization of new technologies that will result in more efficient uses of energy and water and a reduced environmental impact in minerals processing.³
- Mines and minerals is a high-growth potential industry with many rare earth minerals having the potential to drive the economy of the future. Key investments now can ensure Alberta, and the EMR, can capitalize on this growth.

² Source: Edmonton Global: [Life Sciences - Edmonton Global](#)

³ Source: University of Alberta Faculty of Engineering: [Mineral Processing Technology | Engineering at Alberta \(ualberta.ca\)](#)



Priority 2: Talent retention and attraction

To secure a positive economic future, it is vital that the EMR is competitive with other jurisdictions as a destination for talent that offers a multitude of attractive benefits for living in the area. Investing in education, improving growth in key industries, and elevating community pride to make the EMR a destination of choice will assist in attracting future residents and retaining the current population.

Opportunity 2.1: Provide access to high-quality education institutions

Limitations on enrollment, high entrance requirements for programs, and general lack of accessibility to high-quality education opportunities can result in qualified students leaving the EMR to pursue their studies elsewhere. These factors can also dissuade potential future residents from relocating to the region. This can be especially problematic when there are jobs in high demand that aren't being filled due to a lack of available talent.

Action: Increase accessibility of post-secondary opportunities for the resident student population through increased enrolment expansion funding, tuition grants, and micro-credentialing for programs training students for employment in industries facing labour shortages.

- This includes providing increased funding toward post-secondary institutions to ensure programs have enough spots available to meet the needs of business.
- A focus on programs that prepare students for both the economy of the future as well as high-growth industries in the EMR.
- Bolster program flexibility to allow for hybrid learning and micro-credentialing, allowing students to work and attend school at the same time.

Opportunity 2.2: Attract and retain the top talent into the Edmonton Metropolitan Region

Alberta's post-secondary institutions are leading the way in numerous fields, helping to attract the best and brightest from around the world. Top students in the EMR should first consider our post-secondary institutions as they advance their studies. Specifically, efforts should be made to attract students to high growth potential industries, as once students are here, they are more likely to build their careers here.

Action: Collaborate with post-secondary institutions, municipalities, businesses, and industry associations to set up initiatives that help attract and retain students in province post-graduation.

- Improve connections between post-secondary institutions and their communities, including but not limited to job markets.
- Efforts should be made to both attract and retain top talent to study at our post-secondary institutions.
- Promote opportunities for talent in artificial intelligence and deep tech, food and agriculture, health and life sciences, hydrogen, and logistics and supply chain.
- Tax incentives for research and development, co-op education, and apprenticeship initiatives, as well as recruitment incentives for trained professionals in growth/need areas can be leveraged to promote the EMR as a destination of choice for skilled workers.



Priority 3: Investment attraction and marketing

The EMR has experienced considerable growth over the past decade. Today, it is home to an increasing number of industries, steering us to opportunities that will drive economic growth in the province long into the future. In order to build on this potential, we will need to address policy, infrastructure, and market access needs and clearly communicate the EMR's assets to the world to garner interest and create an attractive investment environment.

Opportunity 3.1: Lower the cost of utilities

Challenges around transmission and distribution (T&D) and ineffective T&D tariff structures incentivize utility providers to expand as much as possible, and/or move private infrastructure into tariff base. These incentives are unsustainable and impede economic growth through increasing cost to consumers.

Action: The province should develop a framework with utility providers to impair overbuilt assets that are not appropriately utilized. Such a framework would include compensation to impacted utility providers until such time as market demand warrants they come back online.

- Impair non-performing assets to create the right cost base and persuade supply and demand alignment.
- Provincial contributions to cover impairment costs would provide considerable benefit to taxpayers who currently pay exponential amounts through annual yield.
- High utility costs were identified as a key issue affecting the competitiveness of businesses in the region and across the province.

Opportunity 3.2: Establish special economic zones

The EMR lacks sufficient serviceable industrial land for accelerating national and international investment attraction. Increasing infrastructure and land development will help to attain this investment. Special economic zones are advantageous as they are pre-approved allowing construction to start quickly.

Action: Establish special economic zones for industrial real estate development supported by an accelerated regulatory process and a 10-year fund so businesses and municipalities can develop readily available industrial lands.

- An accelerated regulatory process is equally as important as the funding investment to increase investor confidence in timelines and approvals.
- A \$200-million fund was identified by real estate professionals as the amount needed to provide infrastructure on pre-approved industrial zones.

Opportunity 3.3: Expand market access

Edmonton International Airport is a critical hub connecting Albertans to where they want to go. Every day, thousands of people as well as high-value freight move through the airport, which is considered the gateway to the EMR. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the airport was severely impacted by unprecedented disruptions to aviation services, including suspended flights, reduced frequency of flights, and fewer destinations served by airlines. One in five global airplane fleets were parked and will not be brought back into service due to their age. Equipment retirement, coupled with massive backlogs on the principal airplane manufacturers, means airports will be challenged to see service return quickly as much of the supporting infrastructure has disappeared.

Action: Government of Alberta should contribute \$10M per year over five years, for a total of \$50M, to the Regional Air Services Opportunity Fund to drive even more growth for the regional economy by improving access to international markets in the second fastest growing region in Canada.

- Access to the rest of the world via air travel is a key factor for companies in different sectors deciding whether to build in and operate from the EMR. The recently established Regional Air Services Opportunity Fund has proven to help accelerate the return of air services to the EMR, helping to better position the region as a viable choice for businesses contemplating a move here.
- A lack of air access to key worldwide destinations was identified as a prohibitory to investment into the EMR.
- Increase market access with additional destinations for both passengers and cargo is equally important.

Opportunity 3.4: Market the region

There is a general lack of awareness about business assets that impedes investment in the EMR. This could be resolved through more effective and cohesive marketing efforts. The region is the fifth-largest metropolitan region in Canada and one of the most affordable. The EMR provides several additional benefits that may not be well known to potential businesses and residents. There is a need to more effectively market the region and compete with world-class jurisdictions.

Action: Contribute \$10M to a marketing fund to be used by Edmonton Global and potentially others (e.g., Explore Edmonton) to market the region over the next three years both nationally and globally.

- A focused and creative marketing campaign, building on and leveraging successful information campaigns, will help bring awareness to the regional economy's importance and create a stronger national and global identity for the EMR.
- Additional funding is needed in this space to fully reach audiences the EMR is otherwise unable to reach.
- Marketing to both business and skilled workers is important.
- Broadly communicate that earning potential in Alberta coupled with the EMR's affordable cost of living allows residents to invest in their future.
- Promote benefits of living in Edmonton and EMR. These benefits include:
 - ◆ the arts;
 - ◆ sports (amateur and professional);
 - ◆ the four seasons, beautiful parks, and river valleys views; and
 - ◆ demographic diversity and inclusivity
- This initiative should complement provincial-level campaigns.



Priority 4: Indigenous economic sovereignty

Possessing real and meaningful economic decision-making power leads to improved economic outcomes and decreased economic disparities for Indigenous peoples. This power will be catalyzed by initiatives that enhance Indigenous prosperity and economic self-determination, which benefit Indigenous communities, businesses, and the region as a whole.

Opportunity 4.1: Enable bold and inclusive Indigenous-led economic development

Indigenous economic development should be driven from the bottom up, not top-down, and Indigenous groups and businesses should be leading the conversation about Indigenous development with adequate resources for investments and public education on those investments.

Action: Invest in a multi-year Indigenous-led Economic Development and Investment Strategy with 500 million+ funding accessible to communities, organizations, and companies.

- Continue to invest in the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation (AIOC), with focus on investment in an expanded mandate. While AIOC meets a real need, the working group sees an importance in investing in a broader Indigenous strategy.
- The strategy should be developed by a multi-sectoral Indigenous committee that explores investing in Indigenous entrepreneurs, researchers, and organizations of all kinds—private, non-profit, and government—that are focused on work that contributes to Indigenous prosperity outcomes. This committee would develop the outcomes and process for obtaining funding, as well as identify groups and individuals to invest in over multiple years through service agreements, grants, loans, and other mechanisms.

Opportunity 4.2: Support Indigenous entrepreneurship

Indigenous entrepreneurship is growing nine times faster than the national average. This represents a significant opportunity for the EMR, which is a hub for Indigenous people and businesses from across Alberta and Canada.

Action: Match the capital that Indigenous-run organizations provide to Indigenous entrepreneurs and increase funding for capacity building for Indigenous entrepreneurs.

- Indigenous business support organizations that provide grants and loans for Indigenous businesses are not able to meet the current demand. Increased financial support from the Government of Alberta to match funding for these existing organizations/programs will provide the additional funding needed to support Indigenous entrepreneurs in starting and growing their businesses without creating new programs or processes.

- Training and mentorship opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs will help foster strong business leaders in the EMR and will support the development of stronger relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous owned businesses.

Opportunity 4.3: Enhance Indigenous procurement opportunities

Indigenous businesses are under-represented in our economy despite there being many Indigenous businesses owned and operated in Alberta.

Action: Establish an Indigenous-led Procurement Advisory Committee with the goal of creating an Indigenous Procurement Policy for the Government of Alberta. A mandatory minimum requirement (MMR) for Indigenous subcontracting where five per cent of Indigenous spend goes towards Indigenous contracts.

- The City of Edmonton has recently developed an Indigenous Procurement Policy, as have other jurisdictions. The Government of Alberta should follow suit to develop an Indigenous Procurement Policy to help smaller businesses bid on larger projects where they otherwise may be excluded.

Opportunity 4.4: Increase Indigenous representation

Alberta, and the EMR, is home to a large Indigenous population. The Government of Alberta does not currently have an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policy that ensures Indigenous people and voices are equitably represented in the public sector.

Action: Create a mandatory minimum requirement of Indigenous representation on Government of Alberta public agencies, boards, and commissions. With Indigenous input, ensure the compositions are reflective of the percentage of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in Alberta and in the EMR.

- The policy should be developed in collaboration with Indigenous leaders, or by way of an Indigenous advisory committee. Indigenous representation at the decision-making level will foster stronger policies and programs that support the unique needs of Indigenous people and businesses, thereby increasing Indigenous economic access.



Priority 5: Downtown vibrancy and social supports

An active, populated, and well-developed downtown core is essential to pursuing economic growth and potential investments. Support of urban revitalization initiatives, infrastructure and social supports, and business growth will help enable a safe and thriving environment for those who work, live, and play in Edmonton's downtown. The downtown core is a significant part of the broader regional economy as it is often the first place investors and tourists will see. A strong downtown is important for the growth and success of the region as a whole.

Opportunity 5.1: Introduce funding and incentives to bring more people to the core

Creating more attractive and affordable housing options and commercial spaces will encourage people to live and work downtown.

Action: Provincial Government provides a residential construction grant (per door), focused on increasing the downtown population

- A residential construction grant would create an incentive for developers to build more housing downtown.
- With additional housing in the downtown core, the price of housing there will go down, encouraging more people to choose to live in a downtown neighbourhood.
- An increased population downtown creates a safer, more vibrant downtown core, helps support businesses located in the downtown, and incentivizes new services to open in the core.
- The City of Edmonton's Economic Incentive Construction Grant⁴ in 2021 leveraged a high ratio of private sector investment to support the creation of 2,341 new units in the downtown core

Action: Invest in government-owned buildings and provide other incentives to get provincial employees back in the office

- The Government of Alberta occupies 28 per cent of the office space in downtown Edmonton and many of the buildings need repair. Improving these workplaces is one way to incentivize provincial employees to return to the office and spend time downtown.
- Locating more Edmonton-based provincial employees in the downtown core can help increase the daytime downtown population.

⁴ Edmonton Economic Incentive Construction Grant
https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/funding_grants/private-construction-projects-economic-incentive-grant

Opportunity 5.2: Accelerate downtown beautification initiatives

Public spaces and infrastructure should reflect the goals of a vibrant and accessible downtown, and funding should be made available through private-public partnerships to accelerate beautification efforts.

Action: Provide matching grants for private and public investments in downtown infrastructure improvements (sidewalks, roads, trees, street furniture, and other beautification initiatives)

- Infrastructure must exist downtown to attract people into the core.
- The downtown core should also look attractive for out of town visitors and ought to be a sense of pride for the whole region.
- Incentivizing infrastructure improvements allows both the public and private sector to be creative and determine the needs for both residents and visitors.

Opportunity 5.3: Increase mental health and addictions supports

Mental health and addictions issues are prominent in downtown Edmonton. This presents a health and safety concern for those affected and for those living and working in the area. Adequate resources should be available to better support individuals who are experiencing mental health and addiction issues.

Action: Provide funding for respite and addiction treatment centres, as well as programs with demonstrated success in supporting people with mental health and addiction issues

- Downtown should be a safe space for everyone, including those suffering from and recovering from addictions – an increase in related support services should be available downtown.
- Increased funding should be provided to programs with demonstrated success in supporting people with mental health and addiction issues (i.e., Edmonton Police Service’s Human-centred Engagement and Liaison Partnership - HELP - program).
- The Mental Health and Addiction Community Funding grant should be re-established as a multi-year grant program to support communities and organizations who have demonstrated results related to improving mental health and addictions issues.
- The recently announced \$187 million for tackling homelessness is a good initial step, but further targeted funding can be provided to build upon this.

APPENDIX: WORKING GROUP MANDATE LETTER



ALBERTA

JOBS, ECONOMY AND INNOVATION

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Calgary-Elbow*

February 23, 2022

AR 85829

Dear

Thank you for your participation in the Government of Alberta's Edmonton Metropolitan Region Economic Recovery (EMRER) Working Group. This is an initiative of importance to the Edmonton Region and the provincial government, and I am confident the insights and expertise you will provide over the coming months will be invaluable.

A thriving regional economy sends a signal both locally and internationally that Alberta is economically strong and an attractive place to do business. This is why I have tasked the MLA for Spruce Grove – Stony Plain, Searle Turton to chair this initiative, with support from the vice-chairs, Malcolm Bruce, CEO of Edmonton Global, and Lisa Baroldi, President & CEO of BOMA Edmonton to provide me with a report by summer 2022.

Despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Metro Edmonton economy has remained resilient, and continues to attract investment. However, more can be done to build upon the Edmonton region's world-class reputation, and create a strong economy for generations to come. To that end, I would ask the working group to engage with regional stakeholders, assess their recommendations, and summarize the working group's advice into a report on how the province can support the recovery and growth of metro Edmonton's economy

I encourage you to incorporate solutions that will attract new investments, grow existing businesses, diversify our economy, and build upon our strengths to ensure that the Edmonton region continues to be an economic driver for Alberta and Canada.

As a member of the EMRER Working Group, I request you deliver on the following priorities in collaboration with your fellow Working Group members:

- Engage key stakeholders, including municipal governments and Indigenous leaders, members of the public, and private industry in discussions around how the provincial government can assist in the revitalization of the Edmonton Metropolitan region.
- Meet as a working group on a semi-monthly basis, with the format - virtually, in person, or hybrid - to be decided by working group members
- Independently engage with your respective networks on suggestions for recommendations to ensure a broad cross-section of insights.
- Provide a report to me by summer of 2022 with recommendations for the province to support the Metro Edmonton Regional economy.

Thank you again for your participation in this important initiative and your contribution to both the Metro Edmonton Region and the Province of Alberta.

The first meeting of the working group will be held on Monday March 7 at 3:30 PM. Further details of this meeting will be sent to you via email.

Sincerely,



Doug Schweitzer, Q.C.
Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation