

Report #042

Summary of the Alberta Growth Summit '97

Prepared for the
Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

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Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

Introduction

The final report of the Alberta Growth Summit was released recently. This 300-odd page document discusses in detail the process of the Growth Summit and sets out over 250 recommendations for the future of the province. At the request of the NADC, the Clearinghouse has prepared this brief summary of the main points of the Growth Summit report with particular attention paid to the implications for northern Alberta and for post-secondary education and training.

This report Summarizes several parts of the Growth Summit. First, it reviews the Growth Summit process and its overall results. Next, it summarizes of the main points raised by each of the six sector groups (Social Economy, Business and Industry, Government, Agriculture and Rural Development, Energy and MASH [Municipalities, Advanced Education, Schools and Health]), followed by summaries of relevant “Mini-Summits” as reported on in the overall report. Following those summaries are comments from some of the northern Alberta delegates to the Summit. Finally, there is a list of the recommendations that will, if acted upon, have the most impact upon post-secondary education and training and upon the North in general.

The Growth Summit Process and Overall Results

The Alberta Growth Summit ‘97 brought together a wide selection of Albertans “to look ahead, to consider the kind of Alberta we want to build for the future and what kinds of actions we need to take to get there.” (Final Report, October, 1997, p.1.) The process, which culminated with two days of intensive work on September 29 and 30, began back in January of this year. Albertans presented their views in a survey, through the Growth Summit web site, and in presentations and submissions to sector groups and to some 40 “Mini-Summits held throughout the province in the months leading up to the September summit. The 102 delegates, chosen to represent the six sectors listed above, used this and other input to prepare a series of recommendations to debate at the summit itself.

The results of the summit discussions are found in the long list of recommendations and in the order of priorities on which the majority of delegates achieved a consensus. The overarching priorities, in order, are:

1. People Development
2. Health and Quality of Life
3. Vision for the Province
4. Infrastructure
5. Regulatory and Tax Issues
6. Role and Function of Government
7. Partnerships
8. Framework for Policy Development and Management.

The real results of the summit process will be made clearer in the next provincial budget and throne speech, when the government lays out its response to the various recommendations. The Premier has stated that the final report will be reflected in government policy though not every recommendation can be acted upon, and that people should not look for a return to high levels of government spending.

Mini-Summit Summaries

The following are brief summaries of those Mini-Summits that dealt with issues relevant to the North and to post-secondary education.

Agriculture and Food Mini-Summit, Leduc, August 18.

Held by the Agriculture and Food Council.

The message out of this meeting was :

Rural is more than agriculture - so developing rural communities includes improvements to other business and social sectors in rural spaces; and agriculture is not just rural - growth for the industrial and food uses of agricultural commodities requires investment, skills, infrastructure and political support of urban areas.

The top issues arising from this meeting were the environment and livestock, infrastructure, access to capital and the reduction of trade barriers.

Advanced Education Mini-Summit, Red Deer, August 27.

Held by the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations and the Alberta College - Institute Faculties Association.

This Mini Summit came up with five themes for discussion:

- Post-secondary education should be considered a social investment and the government must act as an advocate and protector
- Technology should enhance not replace instructors' teaching
- Human resources must be supported and developed
- Post-secondary education should be accessible to all persons academically qualified
- A balance between developing individual thinking skills and employment skills must be found.

Aboriginal Mini-Summit, Edmonton, September 23.

Held by representatives of various aboriginal communities in Alberta.

Two themes arose from this session:

- Aboriginal approach - Aboriginal peoples have a distinct perspective, seeing things from a holistic context rather than a straight line economic view. They recognize the importance of the cultural and social fabric as well as the political and economic perspectives.
- Leadership and governance - Aboriginal issues must be dealt with by aboriginal people and aboriginal communities. Community members and leaders must take the lead in developing solutions.

Mackenzie Mini Summit, Peace River, September 10

A wide range of groups and individuals from throughout the Mackenzie region discussed issues pertaining to each sector, identifying six overarching issues for the area:

- The Mackenzie region's transportation system
- Community infrastructure
- Government programs - northern Alberta
- Value-added and secondary processing
- A voice in decision-making.

South Peace Mini Summit, Grande Prairie, August 21, 22.

More than 200 people gathered for this mini summit agreed that northern Alberta contributes more in resource revenue to the province than it receives back. They also agreed on three issues as key to sustainable growth in the north:

- Infrastructure - particularly transportation
- Education and training
- Health care.

Sector Summaries

The Final Report of the Growth Summit is made up primarily of the individual reports of each of the six sector groups. The following is a brief summary of each group's main themes or issues.

Social Economy

The Social Economy group points out in their report that the economy is one part of a larger human and environmental system. They look to a future in which "people-driven values" replace "market-driven values". This is the basis of the sector's major themes:

- We must redefine growth
- The economy and human condition are dependent on ecological integrity
- Investment and empowerment in the future must emphasize our children and youth
- Develop partnerships between all levels of government and the civil society to build healthy, self-reliant, inclusive communities
- Alberta must reaffirm our collective spirit, heritage and pride in home-place
- Education is a critical investment for both formal and informal approaches to learning
- Diverse health care must be accessible, universal and publicly funded. It must emphasize wellness.

Agriculture and Rural Development

The Agriculture and Rural Development sector emphasizes the changes taking place in the agriculture industry. Value-added production and non-food production will continue to grow as the industry moves toward its ambitious production goals. Delegates also point out that this industry affects rural and urban Albertans alike, since much of the value-added processing takes place in larger centres. Cooperation and collaborative efforts will be needed to support growth that balances economic, environmental, social and fiscal needs. This sector identifies six key issues:

- Infrastructure - Alberta's physical and human resource infrastructure must be world class if our agri-industry is to be competitive in the global marketplace. Our infrastructure must contribute to, not detract from, the Alberta Advantage
- Environment - Alberta's soil, water and air resources must be protected/improved for the benefit of current and future generations
- Regulation - A more favourable regulatory climate is necessary in Alberta, in Canada, and in our priority export markets
- Research and Development - Significant investment and focus in research and development is necessary for a growing and competitive agri-industry in Alberta
- Marketing/Competitiveness - To compete in the global market, the agri-industry must become more effective marketers
- Access to capital - \$6 to 7 billion of new capital must be attracted to the agri-industry in Alberta if the objective of a \$20 billion value-added sector and a \$10 billion primary production sector is to be met by 2005.

Energy

The energy sector built its recommendations on two “fundamental realities”:

- The sector must be competitive with other energy supply regions of the continent and world
- It must operate within the environmental constraints on its activities.

With these realities in mind, the energy sector delegates concentrated on five key challenges:

- Shortage of people with right skills to meet expected growth
- Possible erosion of Alberta's favourable tax and fiscal environment
- Lack of harmony, simplicity and clarity in regulations
- Unclear rules and uncertain processes dealing with land and resource access
- Uncertainty and lack of appropriate debate and direction over climate change.

Energy delegates look for new relationships between industry and educators to help solve the skills shortages.

Government

The government sector set out four major issues:

- Setting a vision and clarifying the role of government
- Providing flexibility
- Renewal of public service
- Respect for public service

This sector looks forward to a professional public service with a clear, balanced mandate. The workers will have the flexibility to produce desired outcome effectively and efficiently. They

will also be respected, trained and remunerated as professionals.

Business and Industry

The business and industry sector identifies five most prominent issues:

- Preparing for a changing workplace - overcoming skill shortages and developing qualified employees
- Developing Alberta's infrastructure - to facilitate and support growth
- Attracting new investment and keeping business competitive - providing the right tax climate for attracting and retaining businesses, people, research and development, and investment
- Building on the potential of technology by encouraging more research and development, and technology innovation
- Access to capital - improving access to equity capital for start-up and early stage companies to facilitate the growth and expansion of existing Alberta-based businesses.

This group looks for some investment in infrastructure, research and development and training, along with competitively low taxes and new securities legislation to allow easier access to capital. Like other sectors, this group calls for cooperation between post-secondary institutions and industry to meet training needs.

MASH

The MASH sector makes a clear statement on their concerns:

Our primary message to the Growth Summit is that attention to human services and public infrastructure is urgently needed as an investment in Alberta's future economic development and in the well-being of Albertans.

This message is the basis for their major issues:

- Human Development
- Infrastructure
- Leadership and governance
- Access

Comments from Northern Delegates

We interviewed a sample of the delegates from northern Alberta to hear their views on the issues facing the summit delegates, on how northern issues were dealt with and on the summit process as a whole.

Most of those contacted saw people development and infrastructure as the most important issues facing the Growth Summit and they were moderately pleased with how these issues were dealt with. One delegate listed maintaining the fiscal responsibility as his primary concern. Chief Archie Waquan, of the Mikesew Cree First Nation, raised his most important issue by challenging the other delegates with the question, "Are First Nations people Albertans?" While this issue was not widely discussed, delegates were at least made aware of it.

Northern concerns were not dealt with directly but they did come up as part of the larger debate. Infrastructure, access, environmental and urban/rural issues all figured in the summit discussions

and the final report.

Opinions on the overall Growth Summit process are mixed. On one hand, what was expected of the delegates may have been unrealistic; a large amount of effort was required over the summer months when fewer people were available to do it. Moreover, the expenses involved in getting to meetings through the summer limited some delegates' participation. On the other hand, the Summit was an efficient way to pull together a wide range of views on the future of the province. It was noted that the balance of representation could have been better, as there were only "three or four" aboriginal delegates.

We also asked delegates to tell us what they thought was the most important result of the Growth Summit process. One delegate said that the fact that people from varied backgrounds came together to tell the government, "these are the issues", both short- and long-term, was an important step. Another delegate stated that hearing ministers and the Premier state publicly that the results of the summit will form a part of the government's plan is the most important result so far. Just how the government responds will be the crucial result for other delegates. One pointed out that the government can find support for almost any course of action within the Summit recommendations. Most agree that the real results of the Growth Summit will appear in the next throne speech and budget.

Recommendations of Particular Relevance to Post-secondary Education and to the North

All of the recommendations arising from the Alberta Growth Summit have the potential to affect the lives of northern Albertans if acted upon. On the following pages however, are the recommendations arising from the Growth Summit which have particular relevance to the Clearinghouse partners either because they will have an impact on post -secondary education and training or because they will especially effect the North. Many recommendations qualify in both categories.

Post-secondary Education and Training

Recommendations chosen for this category reflect (among others):

- Funding issues
- Training needs/skill shortages
- Potential training opportunities
- Partnerships to help meet training needs
- Delivery issues
- Curriculum issues.

The North

Recommendations chosen in this category deal with issues and industries that affect large numbers of northern Albertans (many of which reflect issues or needs identified in earlier Clearinghouse reports) including:

- Environmental issues
- Infrastructure issues, particularly transportation and communications issues
- Social issues, especially those dealing with Aboriginal people and isolated communities
- Access to capital
- Energy
- Forestry
- Agriculture.

The recommendations are grouped under the eight overarching priorities dealt within the Growth Summit process; and further grouped under specific issues identified by the various sector groups. The sector group making each recommendation is identified in parentheses. The recommendations are written as they appear in the executive summary of the final Growth Summit Report, wording and punctuation have not been altered.

Post-secondary Education

Overarching Priority: People Development

Issue: Human development

Recommendations:

- Education must be recognized as an investment in Alberta's future which is critical to economic development, personal well-being, and social cohesion. Alberta's leaders - political, business, and community - should commit to ensuring that both K-12 and post-secondary systems receive adequate financial support and public encouragement. Our goal should be the best educated citizenry in the country. Note: We acknowledge a continued need to drive for greater efficiency and effectiveness in maximizing the use of existing capacity. We accept this as a part of our ongoing work. (MASH)
- In order to attract and retain the best teachers and researchers, the Alberta government must ensure that school boards, colleges, technical institutes, and universities have access to sufficient funding in order to be able to provide competitive salaries and working conditions. (Note as above) (MASH)
- Ensure resources and processes are available to support ongoing upgrading and lifelong learning for academic and professional staff, in order to ensure continued quality in the system. (MASH)
- Various ministries, as well as the private sector and community groups, should co-operate in providing students with up-to-date career information during and after high school. (MASH)
- In setting tuition, loan and grant policies, the government must ensure that prospective students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, can afford to further their education. (MASH)

Issue: Renewal of the Public Service

Recommendation:

- Investment in skills development for employees. (Government)

Issue: Respect for the Public Service

Recommendation:

- Commit to hiring new graduates at the entry level and encourage students to consider the public sector through apprenticeships and co-operative training programs. (Government)

Issue: Alberta's physical and human resource infrastructure must be world class if our agri-industry is to be competitive in the global marketplace. Our infrastructure must contribute to, not detract from, the Alberta Advantage.

Recommendations:

- Increase efforts to ensure skilled human resources are available, both immediately and in future, to participate in the growth of the agri-industry and to contribute to rural development. (Ag&RD)
- Make youth aware of opportunities available in agri-industry
 - Encourage apprenticeship/mentoring programs
 - Increase the use of industry advisory committees to ensure agri-industry programming in our colleges and universities is responsive to industry needs. (Ag & RD)
- Increase the knowledge and skills of new and existing industry participants.
 - Increase farmers' and processors' awareness of, and access to, available information.
 - Develop and implement a readily accessible Agri-industry Leadership Program and other practical training initiatives.

- Provide information and training to encourage more farmers to obtain on-line access in their homes. (Ag&RD)

Issue: To compete in the global market, the agri-industry must become better marketers.

Recommendation:

- Increased skill and leadership training by industry in conjunction with educational institutions. (Ag&RD)

Issue: \$6 to 7 billion of new capital must be attracted to the agri-industry in Alberta if the objective of a \$20 billion value-added sector and a \$10 billion primary production sector is to be met by 2005.

Recommendation:

- Improve the agri-industry sector's knowledge and skill for accessing capital. (Ag&RD)

Issue: Preparing for a changing workplace - overcoming skill shortages and developing qualified employees.

Recommendations:

- To address skill shortages in trades, Alberta Education should identify a school-to-work model that will enable high schools to extend opportunities for students to become more employable in technical areas. This will help address industry needs as well as provide additional options for students, especially those who may be less motivated with current options. (Bus&Ind)
- To further address skill shortages, industry and labour leaders work jointly with Alberta Advanced Education to develop approaches for overcoming the current shortage of qualified trades. (Bus&Ind)
- To prepare for the skill requirements for the high-tech/knowledge-based, new economy industries, the Ministry of Science and Research facilitate organizing a symposium of key stakeholders from educational institutions, government, and high tech industries to jointly work together to focus efforts on the educational needs of these industries. It is also recommended that the government:
 - Develop scholarships at the high school and university level to encourage Albertans to move into the science, engineering and computing science fields. This includes co-operative and apprenticeship programs. (Bus&Ind)

Issue: Shortage of people with right skills to meet expected growth.

Recommendations:

- Industry incentives for students to pick up trades or professions using scholarships, bursaries, guaranteed summer employment, etc. (perhaps individual company scholarship programs could be pooled and leveraged in an 'industry' fund?). (Energy)
- Industry and educational institutions together review core skills and eliminate inappropriate labels. (Energy)
- Promote need for vocations, not just professions. (Energy)
- More job shadowing for BOTH educators and students. (Energy)

Issue: Investment and empowerment in the future must emphasize our children and youth.

Recommendations:

- Fully implement the four pillars of the redesign of children's services: early intervention, community-based delivery, integration and culturally sensitive services. Give special emphasis to Aboriginal communities. (Social Economy)
- Develop public/private partnerships with youth and explore programs such as subsidized internships to help successfully launch youth into career paths. (Social Economy)

Issue: Education is a critical investment for both formal and informal approaches to learning.

Recommendations:

- Develop a reasonable, sustainable, flexible and adaptable funding strategy for all levels of education. (Social Economy)
- Develop ongoing avenues for adult education, by exploring educational television and distance learning options. (Social Economy)
- Mentoring programs and internships should be developed through a partnership of the public and private sectors. (Social Economy)
- Provide more funds for bursaries. (Social Economy)

Overarching Priority: Health and Quality of Life

Issue: Access.

Recommendation:

- Research and education programs funded by the provincial government to promote good health and prevent disease and injury should be enhanced for the general population and specific target groups, subject to evaluation of the effectiveness of this approach. (MASH)

Issue: Alberta's soil, water and air resources must be protected/improved for the benefit of current and future generations.

Recommendations:

- Increase the use of developed and evolving environmental technologies and increase the awareness and understanding of environmental issues.
 - Develop education processes that provide accurate and relevant information to the agri-industry and to the public. (Ag&RD)
- Increase information available to show farmers are stewards of the land and are committed to good stewardship in the future.
 - Prepare and distribute accurate and credible information in the schools and to the public.

Overarching Priority: Vision for the Province

Issue: Human Development

Recommendation:

- As a primary focus and first activity, collaboratively develop and communicate a 'vision' for Alberta that incorporates the three principles of personal well-being, a strong society and economic prosperity, and recognizes the inherent value of human development services in achieving that vision.

Overarching Priority: Infrastructure

Issue: Building on the potential of technology - by encouraging more research and development, and technology innovation.

Recommendation:

- To advance a “smart” Alberta and facilitate growth, create a high-performance education system that is responsive in supporting the education and training needs of an innovation-based economy. (Bus&Ind)

Issue: Education is a critical investment for both formal and informal approaches to learning.

Recommendation:

- Educational institutions and the private sector develop a strategy to deal with the increased demand for technology in the classroom. The strategy must be fair, responsible and sustainable.

Issue: Developing Alberta’s infrastructure - to facilitate and support growth.

Recommendation:

- To address the need for communication linkages throughout the province that will assist the development of learning and improve business competitiveness and knowledge, property taxes on linear communications infrastructure should be progressively eliminated over the next five years. (Bus&Ind)

Overarching Priority: Regulatory and Tax Issues

Issue: Develop partnerships among all levels of government and civil society to build healthy, self-reliant, inclusive communities.

- Increase education and compliance programs for employment standards. (Social Economy)

Issue: Education is a critical investment for both formal and informal approaches to learning

Recommendations:

- New performance indicators that are more representative of unique post-secondary institution characteristics need to be used to identify performance envelope funding. (Social Economy)
- Advanced Education and Career Development needs to include greater remission on loans, interest relief and forgiveness programs, and deferred grant in student loans. (Social Economy)
- Develop protocols that ensure a seamless delivery of services to students with special needs. (Social Economy)
- The Tuition Cap Policy Formula should be reviewed. (Social Economy)
- A revamped Tuition Cap Policy should be legislated. (Social Economy)

Overarching Priority: Role and Function of Government

Issue: Leadership and governance.

Recommendation:

- Clarify and rebalance roles and responsibilities among the province, municipalities and MASH sector organizations. Lead: This must be a collaborative process, involving the province, municipalities, academic institutions, schools, health authorities. (MASH)

Issue: The economy and human condition are dependent on ecological integrity.

Recommendation:

- Expand the public sector in environment, parks, wildlife and forestry sectors, including support for relevant career paths through post-secondary institutions. (Social Economy)

Overarching Priority: Partnerships.

Issue: Shortage of people with right skills to meet expected growth.

Recommendation:

- Develop meaningful partnerships between industry and ALL educational institutions so that the institutions can know more about industry needs and match curriculums appropriately. (Energy)

Issue: Education is a critical investment for both formal and informal approaches to learning.

Recommendation:

- Government, industry, educators and labour should work together to establish apprenticeship programs to encourage workplace training, free of inappropriate barriers for entry or mobility, and maintain a competitive base of trade skills. (Social Economy)

Overarching Priority: Framework for Policy Development and Management

Issue: Leadership and governance.

Recommendation:

- Provide balancing mechanisms for all stakeholders to participate in setting direction and priorities for public services such as education. (MASH)

The North

Overarching Priority: People Development

Issue: Preparing for a changing workplace - overcoming skill shortages and developing qualified employees.

Recommendation:

- To further address skill shortages, industry and labour leaders work jointly with Alberta Advanced Education to develop approaches for overcoming the current shortage of qualified trades. (Bus&Ind)

Issue: Investment and empowerment in the future must emphasize our children and youth.

Recommendations:

- Fully implement the four pillars of the redesign of children's services: early intervention, community-based delivery, integration and culturally sensitive services. Give special emphasis to Aboriginal communities. (Social economy)
- An emphasis should be placed on supporting families and communities to foster child literacy – an essential skill in a knowledge-based economy. (Social Economy)
- Introduce stay-in-school initiatives. (Social Economy)

Issue: Alberta must reaffirm its collective spirit, heritage and pride in home-place.

Recommendation:

- Develop a program to build pride in Alberta – our people and land. (Social Economy)

Overarching Priority: Health and Quality of Life.

Issue: Alberta's soil, water and air resources must be protected/improved for the benefit of current and future generations.

Recommendation:

- Increase the use of developed and evolving environmental technologies and increase the awareness and understanding of environmental issues.
 - Expand research and technology transfer to advance management systems and policies.
 - Develop and monitor an inventory of natural resources and of 'best' sustainable practices for Alberta conditions. (Ag&RD)

Issue: Diverse health care must be accessible, universal and publicly funded. It must emphasize wellness.

Recommendations:

- Reduce the number of health regions in the province to no more than eight, including two centres of excellence. (Social Economy)
- Develop health education and health promotion programs for low-income, pregnant women. (Social Economy)
- Government needs to restate its commitment to supporting community-based care for people with mental illness. Policies and funding must be in place to support this move. (Social Economy)

Overarching Priority: Vision for the Province.

Issue: Human Development

Recommendation:

- As a primary focus and first activity, collaboratively develop and communicate a ‘vision’ for Alberta that incorporates the three principles of personal well-being, a strong society and economic prosperity, and recognizes the inherent value of human development services in achieving that vision. (MASH)

Issue: \$6 to 7 billion of new capital must be attracted to the agri-industry in Alberta if the objective of a \$20 billion value-added sector and a \$10 billion primary production sector is to be met by 2005.

Recommendations:

- Significantly enhance awareness of the transformation taking place in the agri-industry, globally and in Alberta, and the opportunities in both rural and urban Alberta.
 - Increase promotion activities in rural and urban communities in Alberta, and in capital markets.
 - Develop and manage a central web site containing information on the advantages of investing in Alberta, available opportunities, and sources of information which are available to assist with due diligence and evaluation. (Ag&RD)
- Maintain and promote Alberta’s existing “Competitive Advantage” (including affordable lifestyle, entrepreneurship, infrastructure costs, and the positive fiscal and business environment). (Ag&RD)

Overarching Priority: Infrastructure

Issue: Infrastructure

Recommendations:

- Develop a provincial strategy for infrastructure maintenance, upgrading and expansion to meet the needs of a competitive economy. (MASH)
- Provide support for infrastructure financing that is more stable and predictable, and reflects local citizens’ needs and priorities. (MASH)
- Explore and evaluate alternative sources of funding for education and physical health infrastructure, recognizing the importance of determining systemic impacts on currently funded social and community service providers. (MASH)
- Coordinate and facilitate the province’s electronic backbone to ensure compatibility and to ensure access to the network for public sector providers and those for whom the private sector will not provide. (MASH)

Issue: Access.

Recommendation:

- Continue to review standards for service funding formulas for services such as education, health and transportation to ensure capacity exists to cope with increasing demand, and making reasonable allowance for factors such as special needs, distance and location, and their impact on service delivery costs and efficiency. (MASH)

Issue: Alberta's physical and human resource infrastructure must be world class if our agri-industry is to be competitive in the global marketplace. Our infrastructure must contribute to, not detract from, the Alberta Advantage.

Recommendations:

- Infrastructure costs should be allocated to the appropriate levels of government and that a balanced and strategic tax system is in place with resources matched to responsibility.
 - Patterns/demands on our infrastructure and funding needs.
 - Reallocate municipal and provincial funding responsibility on a realistic basis.
 - To the extent possible ensure that costs are more closely matched to the appropriate funding source (e.g., fuel tax, license fees, provincial vs. Local funding). (Ag&RD)
- Develop a strong intermodal transportation system to serve east/west and north/south markets efficiently.
 - Identify important corridors for trade and commerce, specific long term transportation needs, and funding sources.
 - Improve the efficiency and market responsiveness of west coast port facilities. (Ag&RD)
- Maintain, upgrade, and further develop Alberta's road network to meet the needs of an intermodal transportation system.
 - Expand resources available to municipalities for the maintenance, upgrading and development of key roads under:
 - The Resource Roads Improvement Program
 - The Secondary Highways Program, and
 - Regular formula-based grant funding for local roads.
 - Establish appropriate policy for maintenance and care of abandoned rail lines
- Ensure infrastructure is in place for access to emergency health care services to promote rural Alberta's existing competitive advantages and quality life style.
 - Ensure adequate infrastructure to accommodate ground and air emergency service throughout the province.
 - Provide a province-wide 911 emergency system. (Ag&RD)
- Increase the amount and quality of on-line information available to the agriculture and rural development sector. (Ag&RD)
- Increase capacity and improve the effectiveness of basic, applied, scale up and commercialization research and development to meet the challenge of supporting a \$20 billion value-added and a \$10 billion primary sector.
 - Support the development of a world class centre of agri-industry knowledge and support responsible access to it by all stakeholders.
 - Promote competitive intelligence initiatives on a global basis to source research and development opportunities.
 - Develop appropriate measurements to evaluate the effectiveness of research and development activities.
 - Facilitate initiatives to make the investment community aware of early stage research and development investment opportunities.
 - Any or all of the above programs have to have a cost/benefit analysis applied before expenditure. Look at industry support as well. (Ag&RD)

Issue: To compete in the global market, the agri-industry must become more effective marketers.

Recommendations:

- Increase competitive intelligence to improve information and awareness on consumer trends, demographics. And the strategies of global competitors. (Ag&RD)
- Accelerate the transformation of Alberta's agri-industry from a production-driven, commodity industry to a market-driven, value-added industry.
 - Enhance research, development and commercialization of new food and other value-added products.
 - Adopt the value chain concept to better position Alberta's agri-industry for growth. (Ag&RD)
- Improve the image and awareness of Alberta's agri-industry sector in domestic and world markets. (Ag&RD).

Issue: \$6 to 7 billion of new capital must be attracted to the agri-industry in Alberta if the objective of a \$20 billion value-added sector and a \$10 billion primary production sector is to be met by 2005.

Recommendation:

- Promote and facilitate the creation of new Alberta-based vehicles to invest in early stage commercialization initiatives.
 - Encourage the establishment of agri-industry merchant bank(s) in Alberta.
 - Promote the creation of an Alberta Agri-Mutual Fund based in Alberta, but sold on major Canadian exchanges. (Ag&RD)

Issue: Preparing for a changing workplace - overcoming skill shortages and developing qualified employees.

Recommendation:

- Continue to support high-tech, knowledge-based research facilities including linking these facilities with the key industry in Alberta. (Bus&Ind)

Issue: Developing Alberta's infrastructure - to facilitate and support growth.

Recommendations:

- To maintain the global competitiveness of the Alberta economy it is recommended that the 1998/99 budget of Alberta Transportation and Utilities (AT&U) be increased to address immediate provincial and municipal infrastructure requirements. It is also recommended that the annual AT&U budget allotments after 1998/99 be based on maintaining internationally competitive standards/benchmarks for a competitive transportation infrastructure. Guidelines should be implemented to ensure funds are used on programs to support the economic development of the province. Ways should be developed to encourage the private sector to invest in the infrastructure through access to capital programs. Municipalities should be encouraged to make infrastructure investment by the provision of attractive interest rates. (Bus&Ind)
- To address the need for communication linkages throughout the province that will assist the development of learning and improve business competitiveness and knowledge, property taxes on linear communications infrastructure should be progressively eliminated over the next five years. (Bus&Ind)

Issue: Develop partnerships among all levels of government and the civil society to build healthy, self-reliant, inclusive communities.

Recommendation:

- Create a venture capital fund for small businesses and non-profit groups. (Social Economy)

Issue: Diverse health care must be accessible, universal and publicly funded. It must emphasize wellness.

Recommendation:

- Barrier-free transportation needs of persons with disabilities must be addressed to successfully move from institutional to community care. (Social Economy)

Overarching Priority: Regulatory and Tax Issues

Issue: Alberta's physical and human resource infrastructure must be world class if our agri-industry is to be competitive in the global marketplace. Our infrastructure must contribute to, not detract from, the Alberta Advantage.

Recommendations:

- Promote continued deregulation of the rail transportation system and further harmonization of interprovincial trucking regulations. (Ag&RD)
- Take steps to ensure we have sufficient numbers of workers, critical to the success of many agri-business operations. Where Canadian workers cannot be realistically trained or relocated, consider advisability for fast track immigration initiatives to be implemented to meet competitive market needs. (Ag&RD)

Issue: A more favourable regulatory climate is necessary in Alberta, in Canada, and in our priority export markets.

Recommendations:

- Continue to review and remove conflicting and regressive regulation and legislation. Continually evaluate the impact of legislation and regulation on the competitiveness of the agri-industry, and make changes as required.
 - Give grain producers the right to sell their products where they see fit.
 - Remove railroad diesel fuel and aviation fuel taxes.
- Take an aggressive stance on trade liberalization and the harmonization of regulations and standards interprovincially and internationally (primarily with the U.S.).
 - Continue to work to reduce interprovincial trade barriers.
 - Harmonize federal/provincial inspection standards.
 - Identify targets for tariff reduction and increased harmonization in key international markets that "play on our strengths".
 - Develop a strong and united industry/government position to influence the federal government on agri-industry trade policy. (Ag&RD)

Issue: To compete in the global market, the agri-industry must become more effective marketers.

Recommendation:

- Allow the value-added sector to purchase grain directly from producers. (Ag&RD)

Issue: Building on the potential of technology - by encouraging more research and development, and technology innovation.

Recommendation:

- To encourage individual Albertans, in partnership with the province, to support the commercialization of new technologies in Alberta, create the regulatory environment that allows an Alberta Advantage Technology Fund to provide patient capital. One option is to develop a “made-in-Alberta” sponsored venture capital corporation. The fund(s) would require a clear mandate specifying where the money is to be invested. The management must be independent of government. (Bus&Ind)

Issue: Access to capital - improving access to equity capital for start-up and early stage companies and to facilitate the growth and expansion of existing Alberta-based businesses.

Recommendation:

- To provide Albertans and the government of Alberta the opportunity to invest in and benefit from supporting Alberta businesses and the future economic prosperity and growth of the province, establish an “Alberta Advantage Growth Fund” and/or alternative types of funds to help fill the void in capital financing from conventional sources. (Bus&Ind)

Issue: Forest products industry: Long-term access to wood supply has a major impact on the ability of forest companies to make long-term investment commitments.

Recommendation:

- In order to enhance Alberta’s forest tenure system, the Alberta government, the forest products industry and forest-based communities should work together to:
 - Evaluate extending the term of agreements (beyond the current 20-year term) to increase investment and value-added activity
 - Develop renewal requirements based primarily on responsible forest management practices and criteria. (Bus&Ind)

Issue: Shortage of people with right skills to meet expected growth.

Recommendation:

- Remove systems and inappropriate barriers, while maintaining standards, for people external to Alberta to work in Alberta. (Energy)

Issue: Lack of harmony, simplicity and clarity in regulations.

Recommendations:

- Industry lead the development of principles, criteria and time-line for re-regulation or revised/new regulations using multi-stakeholder, transparent process. Once approved, use a multi-stakeholder process to develop and implement regulations (use current self-regulated industries as models). (Energy)
- With regard to simplicity, regulate by industry (e.g. mining) versus regulation by product (e.g. diamonds, oil). (Energy)
- Industry, as a part of collaborative process with government and other affected parties, will support and augment resource regulatory change. Through the use of secondments, industry will assist existing governmental staff, cross-pollinate both industry and government, not increase the costs of doing business. (Energy)
- With respect to harmony, identify a ‘principal’ regulator (follow investment community model) who becomes a lead agency in the application of regulations. This will eliminate duplication of services as well as provide for clarity, and consistency, in the development process. (i.e. eliminate conflicts between federal and provincial agencies). (Energy)

Issue: Possible erosion of Alberta's favourable tax/fiscal environment.

Recommendation:

- Ensure that investment in the Alberta energy industry is made as friendly as possible for investors. Such steps should include easy to follow processes, a sensible tax regime, Alberta's fiscal processes, etc., but should not have government in the role of picking winners or losers in the result. (Energy)

Issue: Uncertainty and lack of appropriate publicly funded analysis, discussion and understanding re: government direction on climate change.

Recommendation:

- Engage public in a discussion moving them from awareness through to commitment to agreed upon changes/solutions. More importantly, the threats and opportunities offered all Albertans by the climate change issue should be elevated to an overarching issue. No discussion of Alberta's growth can fail to focus on its significance. (Energy)

Issue: Lack of clarity and need for timely processes for access to land and resources.

Recommendations:

- Constant review and improvement of processes based on successes and setback. (Energy)
- Must develop clear inventory of current land use. (Energy)
- Combine all land use planning into one common model (Energy)

Issue: We must re-define growth and establish limits to growth.

Recommendation:

- Re-establish regional planning commissions designed to involve the public in local economic development by outlining local assets and unique features worth celebrating. (Social Economy)

Issue: The economy and human condition are dependent on ecological integrity.

Recommendations:

- Consider social and cultural implications in allocating land. (Social Economy)
- Implement and expand Special Places 2000. (Social Economy)
- Place restrictions on growth for enterprises compromising critical, fragile and rare environments. (Social Economy)
- Introduce greater protective environmental legislation. (Social Economy)
- Reform tax laws to recognize natural assets. (Social Economy)

Issue: Investment and empowerment in the future must emphasize our children and youth.

Recommendations:

- The Province of Alberta must adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as the basis for developing professional standards and funding services. (Social Economy)
- Reduce the number of regions for children's services to six or to the number of health regions (which should also be reduced) so that the boundaries of these regions remain co-terminus.
- Introduce two Centres of Excellence for children's services. Integrate areas of government departments serving children (Health, Education, Justice and Family and Social Services) to ensure a seamless delivery of services. (Social Economy)

Issue: Develop partnerships among all levels of government and the civil society to build

healthy, self-reliant, inclusive communities.

Recommendation:

- Implement legislation to permit and promote community loan circles. (Social Economy)

Overarching Priority: Role and Function of Government

Issue: Tourism Industry Action.

Recommendation:

- To optimize the benefits of a strong tourism industry in Alberta, re-visit the Alberta Tourism Partnership (ATP) arrangement to determine further steps necessary to ensure it is working effectively with stakeholders in marketing Alberta internationally as a tourist destination. (Bus&Ind)

Issue: Lack of clarity and need for timely processes for access to land and resources.

Recommendation:

- Government departments to be advocates for responsible (economic, environmental, and social) development of natural resources. (Energy)

Issue: The economy and human condition are dependent on ecological integrity.

Recommendation:

- Expand the public sector in environment, parks, wildlife and forestry sectors, including support for relevant career paths through post-secondary institutions. (Social Economy)

Overarching Priority: Partnerships

Issue: Alberta's soil, water and air resources must be protected/improved for the benefit of current and future generations.

Recommendation:

- Facilitate an alliance of stakeholders to develop a rural land planning strategy for the livestock industry that addresses environmental sustainability, global competitiveness and public acceptance. (Ag&RD)

Issue: To compete in the global market, the agri-industry must become more effective marketers.

Recommendation:

- Improve the image and awareness of Alberta's agri-industry sector in domestic and world markets.
 - Earn an identity of excellence for the products/services of Alberta's agri-industry
 - Consider a "Team Alberta" marketing approach. (Ag&RD)

Issue: Human Development.

- Develop a process in co-operation with the private sector to pursue innovative ways of helping marginalised populations participate in growth. (MASH)

Sources

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