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Land-use framework six key strategies

Edmonton... The *Draft Land-use Framework* proposes six key strategies to improve land-use planning and decision-making in Alberta.

Strategy 1: Develop six regional land-use plans based on six new land-use regions.

- Proposed regions based on the major watersheds with boundaries aligned to best fit with existing municipal boundaries and the natural regions.
- Regional plans integrate provincial policies at the regional level; set out regional land-use objectives; provide context for land-use decision-making within the region; and reflect the uniqueness and priorities of each region.
- Regional plans define economic, environmental and social outcomes for regions, and a broad plan for land and natural resource use for public and private lands within the regions.
- Municipalities and provincial government departments must comply with each regional plan in their decision-making.

Strategy 2: Create a Cabinet Committee supported by a Land-use Secretariat and establish a Regional Advisory Council for each region.

- A Cabinet Committee will oversee implementation of the Land-use Framework.
- The Cabinet Committee and Land-use Secretariat will be responsible for the development of regional plans in conjunction with government departments and the Regional Advisory Councils.
- Regional Advisory Councils, with members representing the range of interests within the region, will provide advice to the Secretariat on the development of regional plans.
- Once approved by Cabinet, regional plans will become provincial policy.
- Local decision-making authority remains with the same officials who currently exercise it.
- Local decisions need to be consistent with regional plans.

Strategy 3: Cumulative effects approach will be used at the regional level to manage the impacts of development on land, water and air.

- Regional plans will adopt a cumulative effects approach that considers the total impact of development in a region, over time, in decision-making and imposes limits on impacts, rather than on development.
- The Alberta government will identify appropriate thresholds and targets for air, land, water and biodiversity at the regional levels and where appropriate, at sub-regional levels.
- Land-use planning and decision-making will operate within these defined thresholds.
- This approach will balance environmental objectives with our socio-economic values.

Strategy 4: Develop new policy tools for conservation and stewardship on private and public lands.

- The Alberta government will work with the Institute of Agriculture, Forestry and the Environment, and other provincial applied research institutes to develop a strategy for conservation and stewardship on public and private lands. The strategy will:
 - evaluate the effectiveness of programs and practices;
 - develop education and awareness programs;
 - identify and develop new best practices, tools, market-based approaches and incentives to provide ecological goods and services;
 - develop action plans for the conservation and sustainable use of Alberta's biodiversity that can be used to support and inform the development of regional plans.

Strategy 5: Establish an information, monitoring and knowledge system to contribute to the continuous improvement of land-use planning and decision-making.

- The provincial government will create an improved Integrated Information Management System that monitors the state of the land and the status of land use in the province.
- It will build on existing information-sharing initiatives; review and improve protocols for information sharing, and incorporate scientific and traditional ecological knowledge.
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems will determine if land-use policies are achieving desired outcomes.
- The Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Program, which will be implemented through the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute, will be a central component of this system.

Strategy 6: Include Aboriginal Peoples in land-use planning

The Aboriginal Peoples of Alberta have an historic connection to Alberta's land and environment. The Alberta government will:

- strive for a meaningful balance that respects the constitutionally protected rights of aboriginal communities and the interests of all Albertans.
- encourage Aboriginal communities to participate in the development of land-use plans;
- continue to support traditional use studies to document Aboriginal uses of public lands and share information on Aboriginal uses of public land to inform the decision-making process; and
- strive to protect and preserve identified sacred cultural sites for future generations.

Priority actions

Metropolitan plans for the Capital and Calgary regions

- The framework supports the development and implementation of the Capital Region Plan slated for completion by January 2009, and the completion of the metropolitan planning initiative being undertaken by the Calgary Regional Partnership.
- The Alberta government recognizes that metropolitan plans may be completed before regional plans are in place. Once completed, the regional plans will guide future updates of the metropolitan plans.

Southern Alberta Regional Plan

- Southern Alberta contains over half of Alberta's total population but has the least water.
- Most of Alberta's coal-bed methane, roads and rail lines are concentrated in Southern Alberta. The region grows most of Alberta's wheat, barley and canola, and contains the majority of feedlots.
- Southern Alberta depends on the ecological integrity of the eastern slopes for its water supply.

Northeast Alberta Regional Plan

- Alberta's oil sands and related activity are important drivers of the provincial economy.
- The pace of growth in the oil sands has created pressures on essential services, infrastructure, and the environment.

The framework also identifies that clear provincial policy is important to address ongoing challenges:

- develop a transportation and utility corridors strategy to reduce land fragmentation and environmental impact;
- develop a plan for parks to conserve and protect the diversity of Alberta's land base;
- determine more effective approaches to reduce the fragmentation and conversion of agricultural land;
- develop a comprehensive strategy to better manage growing recreational use pressures on public lands;
- develop policy to minimize exposure of developments and settlements to flood risk; and
- review the current process for identifying major surface concerns prior to public offering of Crown mineral rights.

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