

# ALBERTA'S RECOVERY PLAN: INVEST ALBERTA AND THE INVEST ALBERTA CORPORATION

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On June 29, 2020, the Government of Alberta announced Alberta's Recovery Plan (ARP) amidst a backdrop of quick and sharp economic downturns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, global recession and the collapse of oil prices. The ARP is an ambitious long-term economic strategy to build and diversify business in the province and create jobs in the process.

Alberta has always been bold and resilient, and the ARP is no different. It is an aggressive and novel response to the current challenges facing Alberta. It encompasses both a recognition of the province's historic strengths, as well as consideration of future economic opportunities. The key theme driving the ARP is Alberta's well-known entrepreneurial culture, both as a strength for enhancing and accelerating existing activity and as a facilitator for attracting new talent and companies. The ARP recognizes that the best advocates for Alberta are Albertans themselves.

The ARP was developed with the input of Alberta's Economic Recovery Council. The Council was recruited to provide expert insight and advice on the province's recovery. It consists of a number of notable business and public service minds, including Dr. Jack Mintz and the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper. A full listing of the Council members can be found on the Government of Alberta - Economic Recovery Council's website. While the Council itself did not prepare a final report with recommendations, it provided insight to the Government and Cabinet, which in turn shaped the ARP.

Implementation of the ARP is in its early stages, but some of the strategy measures have already been announced. The ARP considers Alberta's strengths, being for example, Alberta's young and well-educated population, abundance of natural resources, low cost of living, and favourable tax rates. The key goals of the ARP are as follows:

- Immediate creation of tens of thousands of jobs
- Make Alberta more competitive on the long-term
- Accelerate economic diversification in industries of the future
- Ensure a strong future for the bedrock sector of our economy: Alberta's innovative energy industry

- Immediately show investors around the world that Alberta means business

These goals will be implemented through a number of investments and policy reforms, the details of which be announced over the coming weeks and months. However, details have begun to emerge about some of the immediate programs. For example, a number of tax cuts and grants such as the Job Creation Tax Cut and the Innovation Employment Grant are being accelerated to attract new business investment and create high-paying jobs. Other initiatives include renewed funding commitments for existing programs, such as the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, which supports technology start-ups, and job training programs such as Women Building Futures and Skills Canada Alberta. Core infrastructure programs have been announced as well, including the Keystone XL pipeline, various water and flood mitigation projects, and funding for municipal infrastructure and road projects.

A particularly exciting announcement is the creation of Invest Alberta, a new provincial agency that will lead Alberta's investment attraction strategy. This agency is anticipated to undertake an aggressive worldwide campaign to attract job-creating investment. This will be achieved through a number of mechanisms, including:

- Recognizing Alberta's capital sources and retooling and expanding the existing network of Alberta international investment offices located in London, New York, Hong Kong, Singapore, Toronto and Houston, amongst others
- Providing concierge services to prospective investors to assist with regulatory and red-tape hurdles and facilitate access to the marketplace
- Promoting the Alberta brand and building investor confidence with leading banks and investors by demonstrating Alberta's solemn commitment to environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards across all industries
- Proactively targeting key companies and sectors for strategic discussions about Alberta's advantages and location and relocation opportunities

Although strengthening and promoting Alberta's energy sector is a component of the ARP, the Government is looking to build on existing foundations and strengths in the innovation, tech, agriculture, forestry, aviation, tourism and creative industries, and develop emerging sectors. These emerging sectors include biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, logistics, and technology.

It is anticipated that Invest Alberta will provide ambitious leadership from the provincial level to the already existing regional and municipal development organizations, chambers, and educational institutions that have the mandate to attract new business, talent and investment. Opportunities for collaboration and teamwork are expected.

On July 7, 2020, the Government took steps to proceed with Invest Alberta by introducing Bill 33, the *Alberta Investment Attraction Act*. The Bill was introduced in the legislature by the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism Tanya Fir. The Bill allows for the creation of a new Crown corporation, to be known as the Invest Alberta Corporation. If the legislation is passed, the corporation will be governed by a board of up to seven members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and the board may then in turn appoint a CEO. The allocated budget for the new corporation would be up to \$18 million over the next three years.

The establishment of Invest Alberta is part of Alberta's overall policy objective of "getting Alberta back to work", which in the new economy means recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, global recession and collapse of oil prices. The ARP aims to show that Alberta is shovel-ready, open for business and ready to take control of its future for generations to come.

For more information, please refer to the ARP and accompanying Economic Statement, both of which are available on the Government of Alberta's [website](#) and Bill 33, which is available on the Legislative Assembly of Alberta's [website](#).

by Julia Loney

### **A Cautionary Note**

The foregoing provides only an overview and does not constitute legal advice. Readers are cautioned against making any decisions based on this material alone. Rather, specific legal advice should be obtained.

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