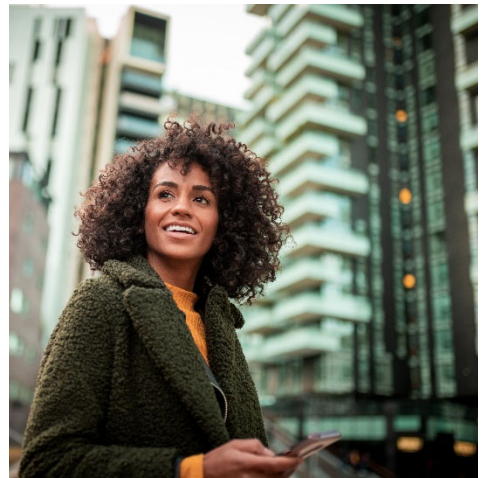


Preliminary Analysis of Alberta's 2022 Budget



 **Alberta
Municipalities**
Strength
In Members

February 25, 2022

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Introduction

After two budgets focused on providing COVID-19 related supports, Budget 2022 is intended to foster economic growth and prosperity.

Alberta at Work is a theme that runs throughout the budget. In addition to initiatives aimed at reducing barriers to employment and supporting business growth, the province is acting on one of the top priorities of Alberta Municipalities and our members: broadband infrastructure. The pandemic has emphasized that a significant investment in broadband is essential to job creation and economic growth.

Despite the focus on prosperity, COVID's shadow still looms over the budget with investments in healthcare required to manage the backlog of surgical procedures. There are interesting signals in the budget about the role the private sector will play in Alberta's healthcare system, which, along with the province's intent to further encourage "choice" in education, will likely dominate public debate in the weeks ahead.

The province's ability to balance the budget for the first time since 2014-15 has also garnered a great deal of attention. Multiple factors contributed to the province's ability to get back to balance. It is worth noting that some of the burden of achieving balance was shouldered by municipal governments through multiple and continuous acts of fiscal downloading by the provincial government.

What you will find in this document

This document includes Alberta Municipalities' preliminary analysis of Alberta's 2022-23 budget as it relates to municipal priorities and the financial future of Alberta communities. In addition, it summarizes the province's fiscal outlook and includes highlights of individual ministry business plans that most impact our communities.

Priorities for Alberta's municipal governments

Stable and long-term predictable revenue

Declining investments in community infrastructure

Budget 2022 continues the downward trend in provincial funding for community infrastructure. This trend applies to all core capital funding programs that municipal governments rely on, including the Municipal Sustainability Initiative, Water for Life, Municipal Water and Wastewater Partnership, and the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program.

The downward pressure on funding started in 2015, primarily through reductions to Alberta's primary infrastructure funding program, the Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI). While municipalities will experience a 59.4 per cent reduction in MSI in 2022, this was expected based on the province's 2021 announcement where it front-loaded the majority of MSI in 2021 as part of a three-year plan before the program closes in 2023-24. Budget 2022 confirms that the Local Government Fiscal Framework will replace MSI in 2024-25, but the funding level is still well below municipal expectations – it will be 37 per cent less than the annual average of MSI over the past ten years.

Thawing the provincial property tax freeze

Revenue from the province's education property tax is set to reach \$2.5 billion, an increase of \$27 million from 2021-22. This is a result of a 1.3 per cent increase to the province's requisition. While this increase was less than what was planned in the previous budget, it marks a departure from the requisition freeze in the last two budgets. While the province has many options to increase its general revenue, property taxes are municipalities' primary source of revenue. Municipalities have worked diligently to keep property tax increases to a minimum in the face of increased expenses resulting from the provincial downloading of costs and responsibilities and inflationary pressures pushing up the costs of providing essential services and infrastructure. We believe homeowners and businesses would have benefitted from a break from this tax increase, in light of the difficult economic times Albertans have endured during the pandemic. After all, there is only one taxpayer.

Partners in economic growth and recovery

Broadband

Alberta Municipalities has been clear in our advocacy for improved broadband in Alberta, and this message has resonated with the province. The Government of Alberta will invest \$390 million over the next four years into broadband projects for underserved communities. This includes the \$150 million already announced in summer 2021. Service Alberta shared that they will be seeking matching commitments from the federal government. If matching commitments are received, the total amount available for broadband projects could be as much as \$780 million.

As the province has previously announced, the first group of projects will be administered through the federal Universal Broadband Fund (UBF) to expedite approvals for the 2022 construction season. Members have shared that UBF program requirements can be too restrictive to address the connectivity issues they face. During a call with stakeholders, the Minister of Service Alberta expressed a willingness to look at frameworks outside of the UBF to deliver projects to as many communities as possible.

As broadband is a strategic priority for our members, we consider this announcement a huge boost for the viability of municipalities. Municipalities will continue to work with the province and other partners to seek a coordinated strategy that increases access to this essential infrastructure.

Economic development supports

As in the previous fiscal year, the province is providing \$50,000 in outcome-based operational funding to each of the nine Regional Economic Development Alliances (REDAs).

The Community and Regional Economic Support (CARES) program provides grants to municipalities, non-profits, First Nations, and Metis Settlements to promote local and regional economic development initiatives. The program currently has 42 active projects; however, it was paused during the pandemic as the province redirected funds to help deal directly with the impacts of COVID-19. Funding has not been resumed in Budget 2022.

Alberta Municipalities' new Economic Strategy Committee is exploring how municipalities, the province, and the private sector can collaborate to boost the resilience and prosperity of our communities.

Avoid downloading

Policing

Public safety, and policing costs in particular, continue to be top-of-mind for municipalities. For municipalities with populations under 5,000 who are policed by the RCMP under the Provincial Police Service Agreement, there are no changes at this time to the police funding model that was implemented in 2020. Last year, these municipalities, along with municipal districts and counties, contributed \$34.9 million to offset the costs of provincial policing. This figure represents 15 per cent of the total cost of provincial policing. The funds raised through the police funding model were to be used to add 76 regular members and 57 public service employees to the RCMP's provincial policing complement. This year, the province's cost recovery will increase to 20 per cent, or \$46.5 million. It has not yet been determined how these funds will be allocated.

Justice and Solicitor General's budget for public safety increased from \$571 million in 2021-22 to \$597 million in 2022-23, reflecting the increase in RCMP salaries negotiated through the collective bargaining process last summer. However, the budget does not appear to include the approximately \$80 million that would be owed as retroactive pay under the Provincial Police Service Agreement. Similarly, a total of approximately \$60 million would be owed in retroactive pay by the 47 municipalities who contract the RCMP as their municipal police service provider through a Municipal Police Service Agreement (MPSA).

Alberta Municipalities and Justice and Solicitor General, along with other provinces, territories, and municipal associations across Canada, have partnered to advocate that the federal government need to cover the costs of RCMP retroactive pay. The collective reasoning is that municipalities were not at the negotiating table; we weren't able to plan for cost increases because the federal government didn't keep us informed; and the magnitude of the cost increases threaten the viability of many communities. We understand that the federal government will begin issuing invoices for retroactive pay to MPSA municipalities in May 2022 and we have asked that these municipalities hold off on paying the invoices until we receive a definitive response to our advocacy from Public Safety Canada.

Affordable housing

Budget 2022 highlights Alberta's housing affordability as a key pillar of the Alberta Advantage. In addition, it promotes *Stronger Foundations: Alberta's Ten-Year Strategy to Improve and Expand Affordable Housing* as transformational. At the same time, total capital investments in affordable and seniors housing programs are set to decrease from \$112 million in 2021-22 to \$87.1 million in 2022-23 and \$81.4 million in 2023-24. This decrease in capital funding is disappointing given the budget's acknowledgement of the growing demand for affordable housing.

Mental health and addictions

Budget 2022 includes an additional \$20 million per year on top of the \$140 million over four years that was committed in 2019 for mental health and addiction supports. Alberta spends approximately \$1 billion on mental health and addictions; the additional \$20 million annual investment will be used to further implement a recovery-oriented system of care that will offer a coordinated network of community-based services and supports.

Alberta Municipalities is pleased to see the government continue to provide essential funding for mental health and addictions supports. While, treatment and recovery must continue to be adequately funded, municipalities would also like to see increased funding for preventative programs and services, including harm reduction, so that some of the costs associated with treatment and recovery can be avoided.

Emergency medical services

Budget 2022 provides additional funding of \$64 million for emergency medical services (EMS) to help strengthen emergency response capacity. Last fall, Alberta Municipalities members passed two resolutions related to the urgent need to improve the delivery of EMS across the province. In response to our advocacy, in January 2022 the Government of Alberta announced a 10-point plan to add capacity to EMS and established a provincial emergency medical services advisory committee that includes representatives from both Alberta Municipalities and Rural Municipalities of Alberta. We are pleased to see that Budget 2022 supports the province's commitment to improving EMS by allocating dedicated funding to this essential service.

Health care practitioner attraction and retention

Budget 2022 maintains the planned level of spending on physicians at \$5.4 billion per year. The Government of Alberta and the Alberta Medical Association are still exploring a return to formally negotiating a new provincial agreement.

The recently announced Rural Education Supplement and Integrated Doctor Experience (RESIDE) program will provide \$6 million to 60 new family physicians over the next three years to attract physicians to practice in 15 identified rural or remote communities of need. The government is spending a total of approximately \$90 million per year on rural physician recruitment and retention.

Alberta Municipalities would like to see continued investment in the recruitment and retention of physicians, and other healthcare providers, such as nurse practitioners, into rural and remote areas. Our members continue to highlight the significant challenges they face in accessing adequate healthcare services outside of metropolitan areas. Some Albertans have to drive hundreds of kilometres to access essential healthcare.

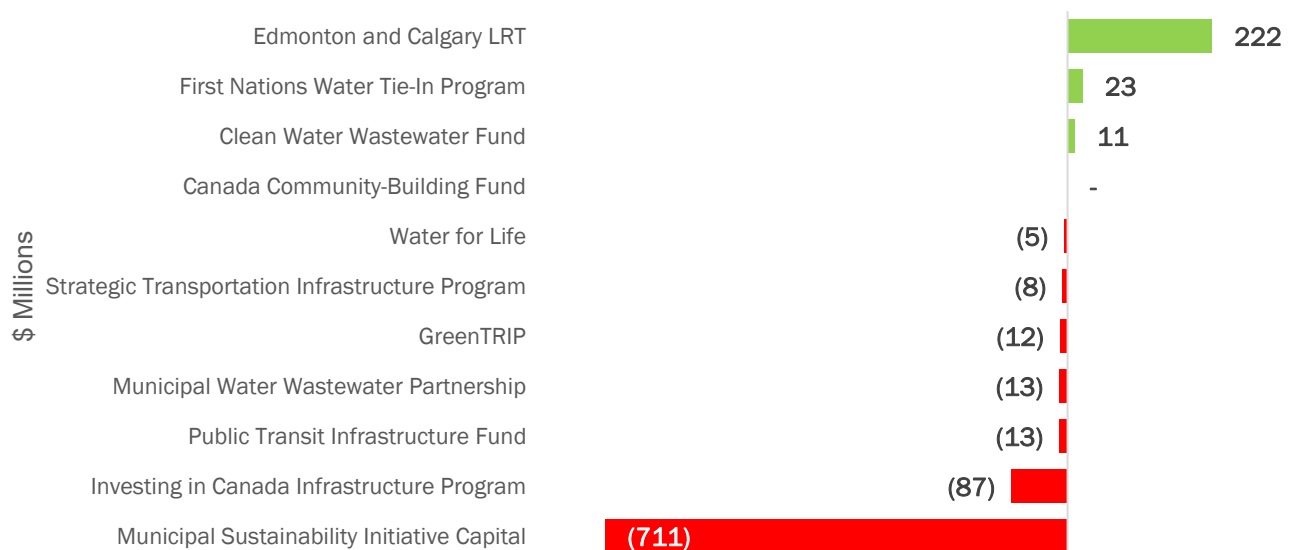
PLANNING FOR YOUR COMMUNITY'S FINANCIAL FUTURE

**HOW BUDGET 2022
SUPPORTS
MUNICIPAL
GOVERNMENTS**

Core capital funding for municipalities

| \$ millions | 2021-22 Budget | 2022-23 Budget | 2023-24 Forecast | 2024-25 Forecast | 2022 vs. 2021 |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Provincial Capital Funding | | | | | |
| Municipal Sustainability Initiative – Capital | 1,196 | 485 | 485 | - | (711) |
| Local Government Fiscal Framework | - | - | - | 722 | - |
| Water for Life | 42 | 37 | 43 | 50 | (5) |
| Municipal Water and Wastewater Partnership | 75 | 62 | 17 | 22 | (13) |
| Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program | 43 | 35 | 25 | 25 | (8) |
| First Nations Water Tie-In Program | 7 | 30 | - | - | 23 |
| | 1,363 | 649 | 570 | 819 | (714) |
| Year-over-year change (%) | | -52.4% | -12.2% | 43.7% | |
| Capital Funding Linked to Federal Funding Programs | | | | | |
| Canada Community-Building Fund (Gas Tax Fund) | 255 | 255 | 266 | 266 | - |
| GreenTRIP | 30 | 18 | - | - | (12) |
| Clean Water Wastewater Fund | 2 | 13 | - | - | 11 |
| Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program | 239 | 152 | 40 | 7 | (87) |
| Public Transit Infrastructure Fund | 21 | 8 | - | - | (13) |
| Calgary and Edmonton LRT (incl. provincial funds) | 485 | 707 | 1,018 | 1,042 | 222 |
| | 1,032 | 1,153 | 1,324 | 1,315 | 121 |
| Year-over-year change (%) | | 11.7% | 14.9% | -0.7% | |
| Total Provincial & Federal Capital Funding | 2,395 | 1,802 | 1,894 | 2,134 | (593) |
| | | -24.8% | 5.1% | 12.7% | |

Year-over-year change in municipal capital funding: Budget 2021 vs. Budget 2020



Preliminary Analysis on Alberta's 2022 Budget

Excluding changes to MSI Capital, Budget 2022 involves slight reductions in most provincial capital programs that support municipal infrastructure. In most cases, the reductions were expected based on forecasts presented in last year's budget. In some cases, the reductions were not as severe as previously forecasted because the 2022 budget includes the carry forward of unspent budget from 2021-22. This applies to the following programs:

- Water for Life was forecasted to decline to \$11 million in 2022 but is budgeted at \$37 million.
- Municipal Water Wastewater Partnership was forecasted to decline to \$35 million but is budgeted at \$62 million.
- The Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) was forecasted to decline to \$70 million but is budgeted at \$152 million. ICIP has been fully allocated and this budget represents the Government of Alberta's contribution to the construction of projects in 2022-23.

Some reductions are also due to fixed-term programs entering their final years, such as GreenTRIP and the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund. The First Nations Water Tie-In Program jumps to \$30 million in its final year of funding.

Overall, core capital funding for municipalities declined by 24.8 per cent, primarily driven by the previously announced reduction in MSI. While the overall reduction in funding was anticipated, the ongoing trend of reductions in municipal capital funding will impact Albertans either through increased property taxes or reduced local service delivery.

Municipal Sustainability Initiative and the Local Government Fiscal Framework

Budget 2022 continues the province's plan to delay the start of the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF) until 2024 and extend the Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) in its place over the next two years. This year represents the first year of the two-year extension of MSI.

Municipalities will note a significant decrease in their 2022 MSI capital allocation, which is a result of the planned reduction in MSI Capital funding (including the Basic Municipal Transportation Grant [BMTG]) and changes to the allocation formula. In February 2021, the province announced that MSI Capital funding would average \$722 million per year between 2021 to 2023. However, a significant portion of that funding was front-loaded in 2021 (\$1.196 billion), which means the 2022 and 2023 amounts are reduced to \$485 million each year.

MSI Operating remains unchanged at \$30 million, which will be appreciated by municipalities.

| \$ millions | 2020-21 Budget | 2021-22 Budget | 2022-23 Budget | 2023-24 Forecast | 2024-25 Forecast |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Capital Component | | | | | |
| MSI Capital (including BMTG) | 963 | 1,196 | 485 | 485 | - |
| LGFF Capital | - | - | - | - | 722 |
| Operating Component | | | | | |
| MSI Operating | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | - |
| LGFF Operating | - | - | - | - | 30 |
| Total | 993 | 1,226 | 515 | 515 | 752 |

Changes to allocation formula for MSI Capital

Due to the significant reduction in MSI Capital funding in 2022 and 2023 and the related complexities of the MSI Capital and BMTG formulas, the province changed the allocation model for 2022 and 2023. The change was announced in October 2021, whereby each municipality's 2022 and 2023 MSI Capital allocations are set at 40.6 per cent of the 2021 MSI Capital allocation. Municipal Affairs opted for this approach so that all municipalities take the same percentage reduction in funding in 2022. The [allocation tables](#) are available on the Government of Alberta's website.

MSI operating allocations fixed at 2021 level

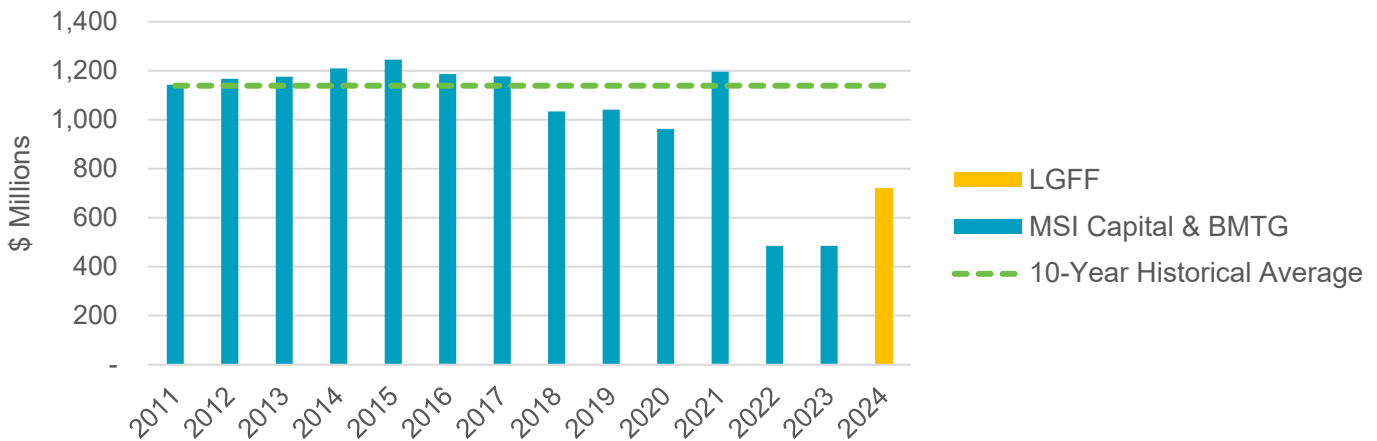
For the remaining two years of MSI, Municipal Affairs also opted to fix the 2022 and 2023 MSI operating allocations to be equivalent to the 2021 allocations. This provides municipalities certainty around their 2022 and 2023 MSI operating funding amounts.

Local Government Fiscal Framework: improvements still needed

In Budget 2021, the Government of Alberta announced that it planned to reduce the starting amount of the Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF) from \$860 million down to \$722 million when it is implemented in 2024. Budget 2022 continues that plan despite concerns from Alberta Municipalities and our members. LGFF offers numerous improvements over the existing MSI and BMTG programs; however, when LGFF starts, municipalities will receive 37 per cent less funding per year compared to the annual average between 2012 and 2021.

Since LGFF is tied to changes in provincial revenue, the reduced starting amount will also mean less growth of the funding pool, similar to earning less interest after you withdraw money from your bank account. As Alberta's population continues to grow, the reductions in capital funding will force municipal leaders to either defer needed maintenance or raise taxes on property owners.

At its start, the Local Government Fiscal Framework will deliver 37% less funding than the average of the last 10 years



Source: Alberta's 2022-25 Fiscal Plan and Alberta Municipal Affairs' MSI Allocation Tables

Note: Advances of MSI Capital in 2014 and 2018 are presented in the calendar year that funding was available to municipalities.

Alberta Municipalities remains committed to seeking improvements to LGFF including:

- Increasing the base amount, and
- Removing or reducing the 50 per cent limitation in the revenue index factor so that annual changes in LGFF will match annual changes in provincial revenue.

Alberta Municipalities plans to work with the province and municipalities this year to design the allocation formula for LGFF Capital for non-charter municipalities and start discussions on the vision for LGFF Operating.

Core operating funding for municipalities

| \$ millions | 2020-21 Budget | 2021-22 Budget | 2022-23 Budget | % Change | Note |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------|------|
| Alberta Community Partnership | 16.5 | 25.4 | 15.4 | -39.4% | 1 |
| Emergency Management Preparedness Program | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 | - | |
| Family and Community Support Services | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - | |
| Grants in Place of Taxes | 30.2 | 30.0 | 30.0 | - | 2 |
| Municipal Policing Assistance Grant | 59.8 | 59.2 | 59.2 | - | 3 |
| Police Officer Grant | 30.0 | 30.0 | 30.0 | - | 3 |
| Municipal Sustainability Initiative – Operating | 30.0 | 30.0 | 30.0 | - | |
| | 266.7 | 274.8 | 264.8 | | |

Notes on Core Operating Funding for Municipalities

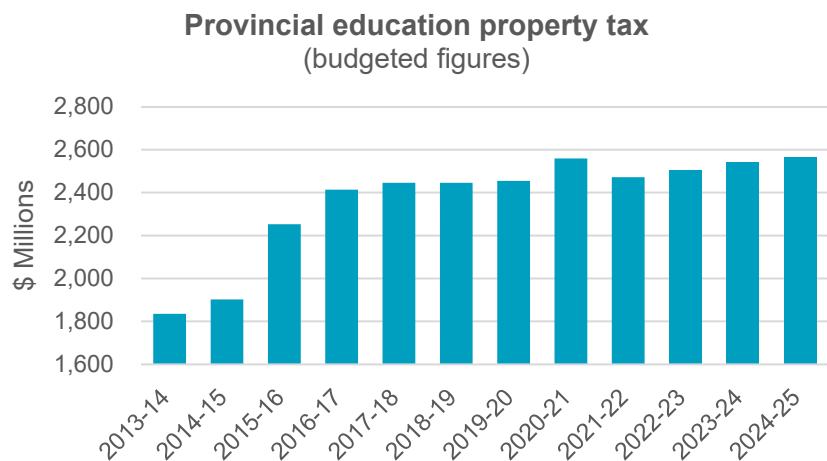
1. The 39 per cent reduction in Alberta Community Partnership funding represents the removal of the \$10 million in funding that was provided to municipalities in 2021 to compensate for managing the voting process related to the *Senate Election Act* and *Referendum Act* during the 2021 municipal election.
2. The Government of Alberta continues to only cover half the amount of property taxes that would normally be owed for provincial properties that are exempt from taxation. The 50 per cent reduction in Grants in Place of Taxes was implemented in 2020 and disproportionately impacts residents in communities with provincially owned properties who must cover the costs of services to those properties while residents of neighbouring communities face no bill.
3. Alberta Municipalities has been informed that the Municipal Policing Assistance Grant and Police Officer Grant will be combined into one program.

Provincial education property tax

In 2020, the Government of Alberta announced a plan to start linking changes in provincial education property taxes to changes in population plus inflation. Those plans were stalled in 2020-21 and 2021-22 as the province responded to the economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and opted to freeze education property taxes at \$2.472 billion each year.

For 2022-23, the province has decided to increase education property taxes, but instead of linking to population plus inflation, the new metric involves

matching any percentage change in Education's operating expenses. As a result, 2022 education property taxes will increase by 1.3 per cent to \$2.504 billion. This figure excludes \$15 million in credits under the Provincial Education Requisition Credit (PERC) program, which supports municipalities that are unable to collect education property tax on delinquent oil and gas properties. Alberta Municipalities appreciates that PERC has been extended for two years.

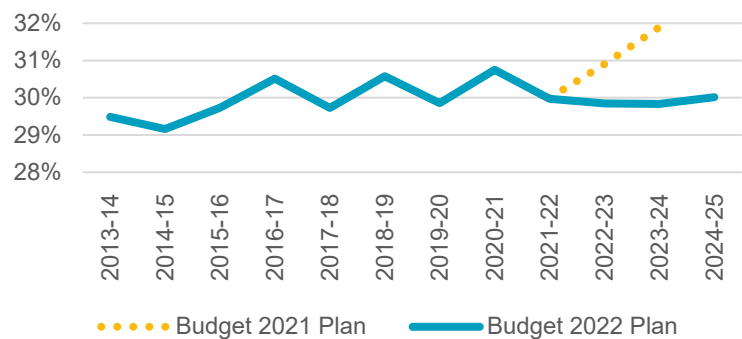


Preliminary Analysis on Alberta's 2022 Budget

| \$ millions | 2020-21 Actual | 2021-22 Budget | 2022-23 Budget | 2023-24 Forecast | 2024-25 Forecast |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Provincial education property tax | 2,472 | 2,472 | 2,504 | 2,541 | 2,566 |
| Year-over-year change (%) | | - | 1.3% | 1.5% | 1.0% |
| K-12 education operating expense | 8,191 | 8,248 | 8,390 | 8,517 | 8,549 |
| Year-over-year change (%) | | 0.7% | 1.7% | 1.5% | 0.4% |

Since municipal governments are responsible for collecting education property taxes on behalf of the province, any increase in education taxes presents a burden on municipal leaders. That said, Alberta Municipalities is pleased to see the province move away from previous plans, which involved significant increases to education property taxes despite holding the line on education spending.

Provincial Education Property Tax as a Percentage of K-12 Education Operating Expense
(budgeted figures)



Notable funding to community entities

| \$ millions | 2020-21 Budget | 2021-22 Budget | 2022-23 Budget | % Change | Note |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------|------|
| Agricultural Service Boards | 8.5 | 8.5 | 8.9 | 4.8% | |
| Agricultural Societies and Exhibition Grants | 11.5 | 11.5 | 11.5 | - | |
| Community Facility Enhancement Program | 25.0 | 18.5 | 38.5 | 108.1% | 1 |
| Community Initiatives Program | 19.7 | 37.1 | 20.7 | -44.2% | 2 |
| Ground Search and Rescue Training Grant | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 | - | |
| Library Services – Operating | 37.1 | 37.0 | 37.0 | - | |
| Legal Aid | 94.3 | 94.3 | 94.3 | - | |
| Regional Economic Development Alliances | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 | - | 3 |
| | 196.8 | 207.6 | 211.6 | | |

Notes on Funding for Community Entities

1. The increase to the Community Facility Enhancement Program is new funding to restore program funding to pre-pandemic levels.
2. The decrease to the Community Initiatives Program is due to the end of the one-time Stabilize Program.
3. Funding is maintained for Regional Economic Development Alliances (REDAs), but the Community and Regional Economic Support (CARES) program remains suspended, a decision that was made in 2020-21.

GOOD TO KNOW

AN OVERVIEW OF ALBERTA'S 2022 FISCAL PLAN

An overview of the 2022 Fiscal Plan

Rising energy prices coupled with an economy rebounding from the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant shift in the province's financial outlook. In Budget 2021, the Government of Alberta forecasted a deficit of \$11 billion for 2022-23. Through increased royalty revenue and limited change in spending, that forecasted deficit has flipped to a planned surplus of \$511 million for 2022-23.

Total revenue for 2022-23 is forecast at \$62.6 billion, an increase of 1.5 per cent compared to the estimate for 2021-22 and 45.1 per cent higher than actual revenue in 2020-21. Increased energy demands as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and activities recommence, coupled with other supply-demand issues, have resulted in significant increases in energy prices. For 2022-23, total resource revenue is budgeted at \$13.8 billion, a 385 per cent increase over the 2021-22 budget and 5 per cent increase over the estimate for the year. Strong growth is also expected in income taxes, with economic recovery and the return of employment to pre-COVID levels driving increases in both personal and corporate tax revenue.

Expenditures are expected to fall to \$62.1 billion in 2022-23 compared to estimated expenditures of \$64.9 billion in 2021-22. The province attributes part of that decline to decreased need for supports related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Statement of operations

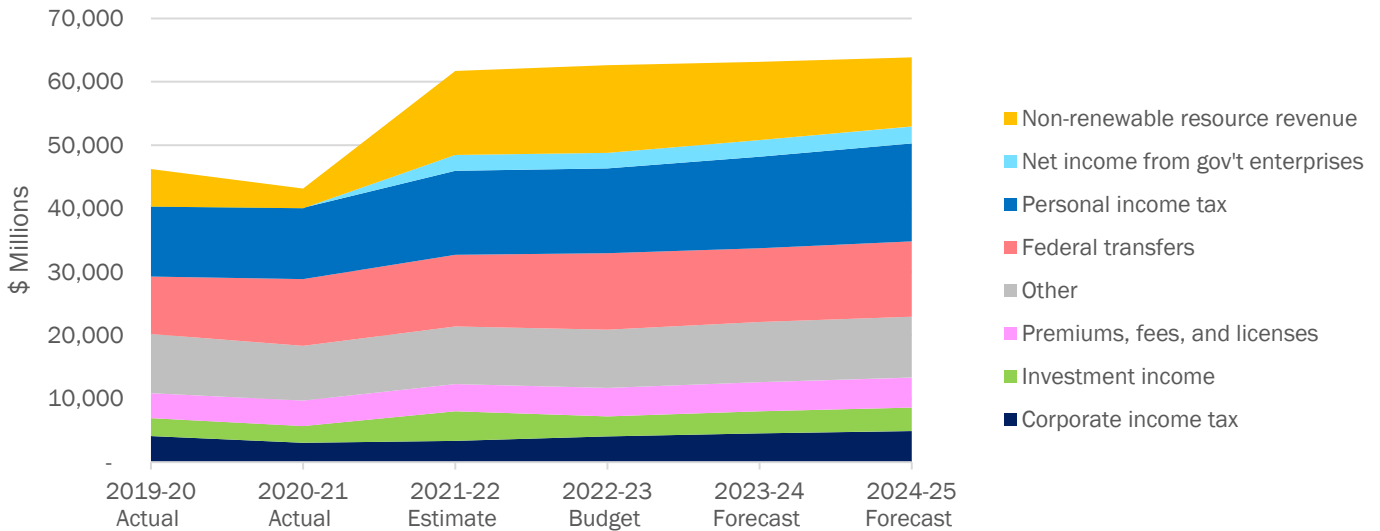
| \$ millions | 2020-21 Actual | 2021-22 Estimate | 2022-23 Budget | 2023-24 Forecast | 2024-25 Forecast |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Revenue | | | | | |
| Personal income tax | 11,257 | 13,261 | 13,382 | 14,442 | 15,455 |
| Corporate income tax | 3,037 | 3,343 | 4,040 | 4,517 | 4,896 |
| Other tax revenue | 5,285 | 5,456 | 5,612 | 5,778 | 5,913 |
| Resource revenue | 3,091 | 13,237 | 13,840 | 12,328 | 10,916 |
| Investment income | 2,643 | 4,660 | 3,173 | 3,492 | 3,699 |
| Premiums, fees, and licenses | 4,021 | 4,304 | 4,490 | 4,606 | 4,736 |
| Other own-source revenues | 3,272 | 6,125 | 6,016 | 6,330 | 6,341 |
| Federal transfers | 10,532 | 11,306 | 12,054 | 11,641 | 11,895 |
| Total revenue | 43,137 | 61,692 | 62,607 | 63,134 | 63,852 |
| Expense by Function | | | | | |
| Health | 23,984 | 25,010 | 24,421 | 24,358 | 24,914 |
| Basic/Advanced education | 14,134 | 15,088 | 15,360 | 15,375 | 15,508 |
| Social services | 5,919 | 6,219 | 6,961 | 7,163 | 7,448 |
| Other program expenses | 13,858 | 16,544 | 12,689 | 12,820 | 12,722 |
| Total program expense | 57,895 | 62,861 | 59,723 | 59,747 | 60,623 |
| Debt servicing costs | 2,486 | 2,401 | 2,662 | 2,754 | 2,837 |
| Pension provisions | (282) | (363) | (289) | (299) | (309) |
| Total expense | 60,099 | 64,899 | 62,096 | 62,202 | 63,151 |
| Surplus / (Deficit) | (16,962) | (3,207) | 511 | 932 | 701 |

Source: Alberta's 2022-25 Fiscal Plan, page 216.

Note: During our analysis, Alberta Municipalities noted that the sum of expense figures in 2022, 2023 and 2024 do not equal the total for program expenses. These figures are sourced directly from the Government of Alberta's Fiscal Plan and as such, Alberta Municipalities has chosen to duplicate the figures as presented in the government's documents. The errors amount to \$292 million in 2023 and \$31 million in 2023 and 2024.

Preliminary Analysis on Alberta's 2022 Budget

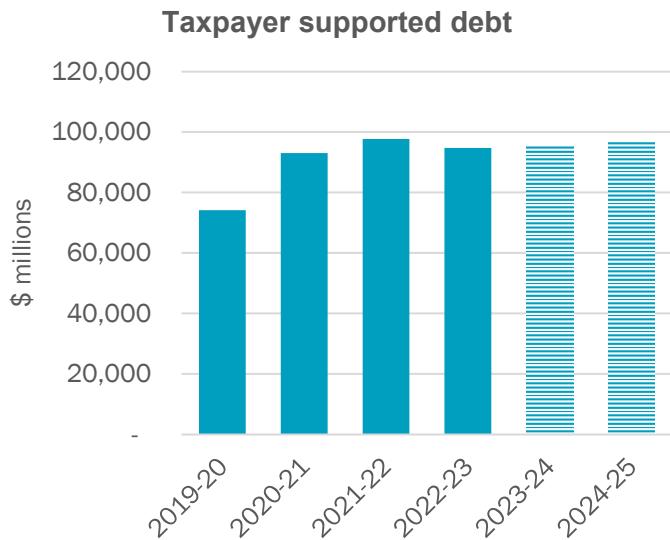
Year-over-year increase in provincial revenue is primarily driven by growth in federal transfers, personal income tax, and non-renewable resource revenue



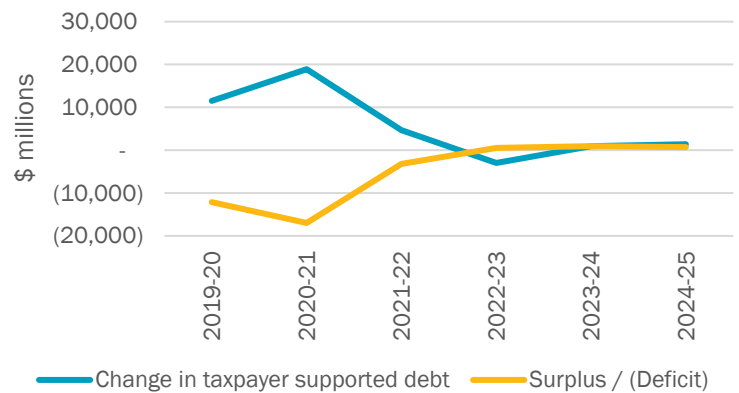
Source: Alberta's 2022-25 Fiscal Plan, Schedule 4: Statement of Operations, page 204.

Taxpayer supported debt

The change in overall debt balances is consistent with annual surplus/deficit figures, as debt funding is used to support activities during years with operational deficits in addition to financing spending. With an operational surplus forecast for 2022-23, no new borrowings are planned for the year. Some debt maturing in 2022-23 will be paid off, resulting in a planned \$2.8 billion reduction in outstanding debt by the end of fiscal 2022-23.

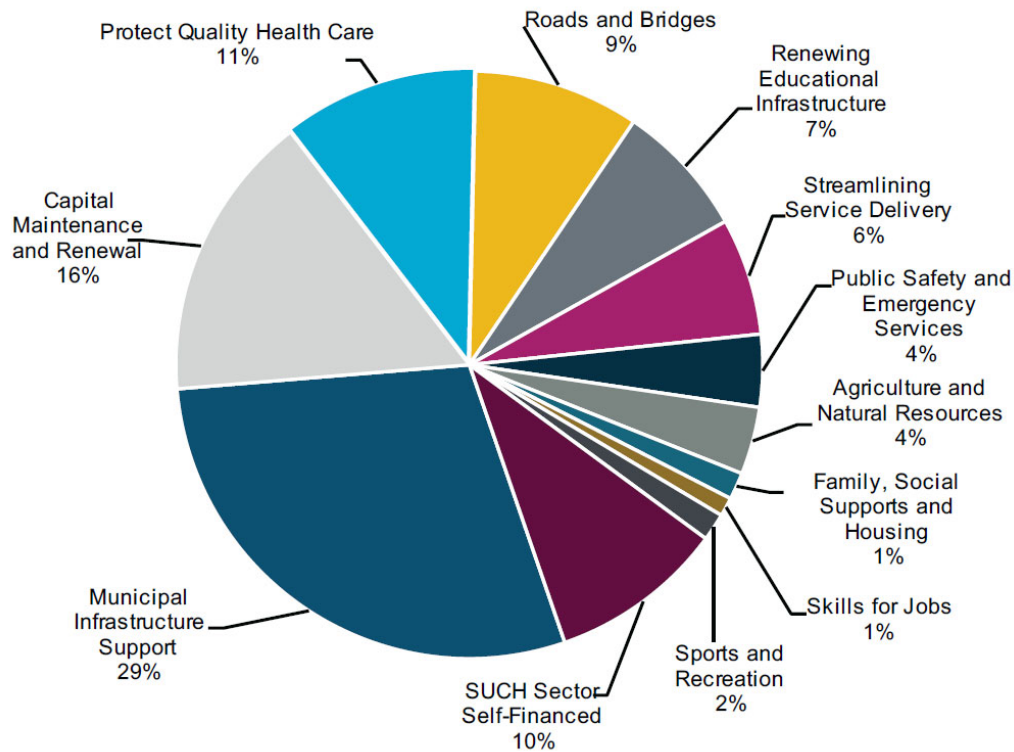


The Transition to a Surplus Budget is Planned to Limit Increases to Alberta's Debt



Source: Calculations using figures from Alberta's 2022-25 Fiscal Plan, Schedule 26, page 216.

Budget 2022 – Capital Plan by category



Source: Alberta's 2022-25 Fiscal Plan, page 155.

Key energy and economic assumptions

| \$ millions | 2021-22 Estimate | 2022-23 Forecast | 2023-24 Forecast | 2024-25 Forecast |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Crude Oil Prices | | | | |
| WTI (US\$/bbl) | 74.00 | 70.00 | 69.00 | 66.50 |
| Light-Heavy Differential (US\$/bbl) | 13.60 | 14.30 | 14.40 | 14.70 |
| WCS @ Hardisty (Cdn\$/bbl) | 75.90 | 70.30 | 68.50 | 64.80 |
| Natural Gas Price | | | | |
| Alberta Reference Price (Cdn\$/GJ) | 3.40 | 3.20 | 2.70 | 2.60 |
| Production | | | | |
| Conventional Crude Oil (000s barrels/day) | 440 | 441 | 444 | 448 |
| Raw Bitumen (000s barrels/day) | 3,220 | 3,296 | 3,316 | 3,368 |
| Interest Rates | | | | |
| 10-year Canada Bonds (%) | 1.50 | 1.80 | 2.30 | 2.70 |
| Exchange Rate (US\$/Cdn\$) | | | | |
| | 79.8 | 79.0 | 79.5 | 80.1 |

Ministry highlights

Advanced Education

Budget 2022 will invest \$1.8 billion in operational funding for post-secondary institutions through the Operating and Program Support Grant. Furthermore, the ministry will invest \$235 million in funding over three years to target programs that address labour market needs and enrolment pressures. The provincial government will also allocate \$168 million in student aid and \$980 million through student loans. In 2022, Advanced Education will continue implementing *Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs*, released in 2021. This initiative targets enrolment into technology, veterinary medicine, agriculture, financial services, and aviation. Alberta Municipalities has heard from our members that many small communities are seeing a shortage of veterinarians. We are pleased to see that Budget 2022 provides investments to address this, including \$9.9 million to expand the University of Calgary's Veterinary Medicine degree programs. The expansion will benefit many small communities that are home to agribusinesses.

Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development

The Ministry's budget will stay at \$860 million in 2022-23. This fiscal year, over \$55 million is allocated to support the Mountain Pine Beetle Program. Budget 2022 provides \$37 million to the Results-Driven Agriculture Research to support the productivity and sustainability of Alberta's agriculture industry, and \$43.2 million for irrigation habitation and expansion. Budget 2022 includes a \$33 million reduction in rural programming and agricultural societies, from \$56 million in 2021 to \$23 million. Alberta Municipalities will be monitoring this to see how the reduction impacts municipalities.

Children's Services

The Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care agreement will help lower childcare fees for Alberta's parents by an average of 50 per cent, with a targeted average of \$10 per day for children aged 0 to 5 by 2026. In 2022-23, \$879 million will be used to provide subsidies to parents with children enrolled in licensed childcare programs and to create 10,000 new licensed childcare spaces in the not-for-profit sector.

While the total operating budget for Children's Services will increase from \$1.71 billion in 2021-22 to \$1.72 billion in 2022-23 (0.6 per cent increase), reflecting the federal investment in childcare, other key programs will see slightly reduced funding. Funding for the Alberta Child and Family Benefit will decrease from \$345 million in 2021-22 to \$335 million in 2022-23 (2.9 per cent decrease) and funding for early child and youth intervention services will decrease from \$128 million in 2021-22 to \$124 million in 2022-23 (3.1 per cent decrease).

Community and Social Services

Budget 2022 provides a slight increase to the total operating budget for Community and Social Services from \$3.89 billion in 2021-22 to \$3.92 billion in 2022-23 (0.8 per cent increase). This funding includes:

- \$13.8 million to Alberta's 16 sexual assault centres (6.1 per cent increase compared to 2021-22); and
- \$1.5 million to Family Resource Centres (25 per cent reduction compared to 2021-22).

Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) funding is maintained at \$100 million and funding for homeless and outreach support services is maintained at \$193 million. Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) funding will increase slightly from \$1.36 billion in 2021-20 to \$1.37 billion in 2022-23 (0.7 per cent increase). However, Employment and Income Support funding will fall from the \$852 million budgeted in 2021-22 to \$813 million in 2022-23 (4.6 per cent decrease).

It should be noted that while \$3.89 billion was the budgeted amount for Community and Social Services last year, the budget forecast came in at \$3.78 billion, or \$109 million under budget. This likely reflect federal transfers related to income support during the pandemic.

Culture and Status of Women

The 2022 capital plan includes \$97 million for new sport, recreation, cultural, and community facilities. The Community Facility Enhancement Program (CFEP) will receive a \$20 million increase from \$18.5 million in 2021-22 to \$38.5 million in 2022-23 (108 per cent increase). The Alberta Foundation for the Arts will receive \$25.6 million in 2022-23, which matches last year's budget.

Due to pandemic related closures, lottery revenues and association funding decreased significantly, which will impact charities throughout Alberta.

While funding for Status of Women programs and services will fall from \$4.14 million in 2021-22 to \$3.98 million in 2022-23, the overall operating budget for the ministry will increase from \$243 million in 2021-22 to \$272 million in 2022-23 (16 per cent increase).

Education

More than \$700 million in new funding over the next three years will be allocated to Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) education to increase resources and supports, including:

- \$191 million for curriculum updates across all subject areas for kindergarten to Grade 12;
- \$3 million to expand financial literacy programming for junior and senior high school students;
- Targeted funding of \$30 million in 2022-23 and \$40 million in each of the following two years to support students experiencing academic challenges, such as learning delays and mental health challenges due to the pandemic; and
- \$59 million will be invested in 2022-23 into teacher development and student resources.

Total operating expenses for K-12 education will be \$8.4 billion to \$8.5 billion annually over the next three years.

The Capital Plan provides funding of \$1.5 billion for school projects, including 15 projects for the construction of new schools, modernizations, and design work to support school building priorities. Projects will be situated to address enrolment growth in communities that continue to see population growth, preserve and modernize existing facilities, and consolidate underutilized space. The expected outcome of this approach is reduced maintenance costs in those communities' experiencing enrolment or population decline.

The budget includes \$209 million over three years for Capital Maintenance and Renewal (CMR) projects to ensure safe and healthy schools. Funding CMR extends the useful life of infrastructure so that existing schools remain functional for longer.

The budget also includes \$46.5 million in capital funding over three years to expand charter schools and the collegiate model.

Energy

This Ministry is responsible for enabling responsible energy and mineral resource development, the Alberta Energy Regulator, the Alberta Utilities Commission, the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission and the Canadian Energy Centre.

Budget 2022 allocates \$78 million for orphan well and decommissioning large facilities (funded through industry levies); \$10 million over two years for the Clean Hydrogen Centre of Excellence to support hydrogen innovation and technology; and \$272 million in funding for the Alberta Petrochemical Incentive Program (APIP). Subject to federal approval, Budget 2022 reprofiles \$325 million in Site Rehabilitation Program funding from fiscal years 2021-23 to 2023-24. The consolidated operating budget estimate for 2022-23 is \$958 million.

Environment and Parks

Environment and Parks' operating expense is \$534 million. Budget 2022 includes \$19 million over the next three years for continued work on the Digital Regulatory Assurance System, which will create a single, consolidated digital system for regulatory applications, approvals, and long-term environmental monitoring. The Ministry continues to work on caribou recovery planning through holistic sub-regional planning processes to ensure a practical and balanced approach that supports a sustainable economy. Budget 2022 allocates \$15.7 million for caribou recovery planning and actions, as well as \$9.8 million for land-use planning and stewardship tools.

The Ministry will continue to improve recreational access through the *Alberta Trails Act* and the Crown Land Vision. Budget 2022 allocates \$75 million to address increased activities on Crown Lands and provincial parks. The provincial government plans to increase the park reservation fee from \$5 to \$10.

Alberta Municipalities asked the provincial government to provide bridge funding for household hazardous waste disposal. Budget 2022 did not include new funding for the Household Hazardous Waste program; however, Environment and Parks will maintain the existing funding until 2023.

The Ministry's 2022 business plan continues to focus on supporting Alberta's Clean Air Strategy, Water for Life Strategy, waste management, and recycling programs. The Ministry is also committed to supporting Alberta's Natural Gas Vision and Strategy (led by Energy) released in 2021. The strategy focuses on turning Alberta into a centre of excellence for plastics recycling in Western North America. The first step to building a plastics circular economy in Alberta is introducing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs for plastics. Although EPR is not specifically noted in the 2022 budget, the provincial government is committed to bringing in EPR regulations by spring 2022. We expect more details will come forward in the next few months.

Brownfields and Contaminated Sites

Alberta's Auditor General recommended that Environment and Parks develop clear guidelines to determine who is responsible for brownfield and contaminated sites cleanup. The Ministry accepted the Auditor General's recommendation in the Fiscal Plan 2022. The Ministry intends to continue to pursue responsible parties that have current ownership, and for sites that do not have a clearly responsible party, the Ministry will develop guidance founded on the polluter pays principle.

Climate Change

Budget 2022 includes \$698 million over three years for Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction (TIER) funding. The TIER funding will invest in Emissions Reduction Alberta, Alberta Innovates, and the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre (MCCAC). MCCAC is a unique partnership between municipalities and the Government of Alberta. More details will be coming forward soon on how this new funding can benefit municipalities through various MCCAC programs.

Health

Building health system capacity is one of the three primary objectives of Budget 2022. Budget 2022 includes a significant investment in healthcare to expand system capacity and prepare for potential future waves of COVID-19. Over the next three years, Alberta will invest \$100 million per year to provide additional healthcare capacity on a permanent basis, including adding new intensive care unit beds and training new acute care staff. The objective of this investment is to make more hospital beds available when Albertans need them, and to reduce surgery wait times.

Funding for community care, continuing care, and home care programs is increased by 6.3 per cent to a total of nearly \$3.7 billion. This funding will support more Albertans to receive care and support in their home communities, as well as to build 1,515 new continuing care beds.

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Budget 2022 also includes funding of \$2 billion for drugs and supplemental benefits, an increase of \$110 million, or 5.7 per cent from 2021-22. Programs for seniors make up the largest component of this funding, with \$674 million budgeted in 2022-23.

\$133 million over three years is allocated for the Alberta Surgical Initiative Capital Program, which aims to increase surgical capacity so that all patients receive required surgeries within clinically recommended timelines.

Overall health operating expenses are budgeted at \$22 billion for 2022-23, an increase of 2.4 per cent, or \$515 million, from 2021-22 (excluding costs relating to COVID-19). The Ministry of Health's total operating expense budget will grow by a total of \$1.8 billion by 2024-25.

Alberta Health Services' (AHS) operating budget will increase to \$15.1 billion in 2022-23, an increase of \$476 million or 3.3 per cent compared to the 2021-22 forecast (excluding COVID-19 costs). Budget 2022 also provides additional funding of \$64 million for emergency medical services, to help strengthen emergency response capacity.

As a result of the AHS review that took place in 2019-20, AHS and Alberta Precision Laboratories have reached an agreement for DynaLIFE Medical Labs to deliver community laboratory services across the province, beginning July 1, 2022. The government plans to re-invest any savings realized through the DynaLIFE contract into AHS' core frontline healthcare services.

Budget 2022 includes a \$750 million COVID-19 contingency, which is intended to give the government flexibility to manage the pandemic as it continues to evolve by making funding available to cover any new or uncertain costs emerging from a changing public health situation. Some of this funding will be used to address the surgical backlog caused by the pandemic.

In terms of capital spending related to health, Budget 2022 includes funding for facilities in Calgary and Edmonton, the Red Deer Regional Hospital, and revitalization projects for rural health facilities. This includes \$46 million over three years towards a \$79-million total project cost to integrate ambulatory care, primary care, maternal health care, and diagnostic services at the La Crete Maternity and Community Health Centre.

\$36 million has been budgeted for the Recovery Communities Stream 2 project to create a new addictions treatment facility with 75 spaces on the Blood Tribe Reserve and to double the capacity at the Gunn site by adding 50 spaces.

While Alberta Municipalities is encouraged to see funding allocated to rural and Indigenous healthcare facilities, additional funding is needed in this area to address aging infrastructure and to further incentivize physicians and other healthcare providers to practice in rural areas.

Indigenous Relations

Indigenous Relations continues to facilitate cross-government collaboration with other provincial Ministries, municipalities, water commissions, and industry to respond to federal Indigenous initiatives, such as access to safe and clean drinking water; the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program; disaster response and recovery, including the COVID-19 pandemic; pathfinding opportunities; and advocating for key services.

Infrastructure

The Ministry business plan referenced the recently passed *Infrastructure Accountability Act* which is intended to provide clarity on how government invests in planning, constructing, renewing, and maintaining public infrastructure. Alberta Municipalities submitted input into the development of this legislation. One of our requests to government was the inclusion of municipal perspectives in the prioritization of projects. While this request was not included in the final legislation, we were encouraged by the language in the accompanying 20-year Capital Plan that refers to partnering with municipalities to deliver infrastructure projects.

Infrastructure is also establishing the Alternative Capital Financing Partnerships Office (ACFPO), which will serve as the central authority within the Government of Alberta for public-private partnerships (P3s) and other innovative infrastructure partnerships. The ACFPO will focus on the oversight of centralized work of P3s, provide expertise required to engage in strategic partnership opportunities, and explore alternative revenue generation options. We have been told that the creation of this office will not impact municipal procurement or financing.

Jobs, Economy, and Innovation

The Ministry's operating expense estimate for 2022-23 is \$698 million. Consistent with a resolution passed at Alberta Municipalities' 2020 Convention, Budget 2022 includes increased support for the Alberta Film and Television Tax Credit (\$81 million over three years). It also includes the Innovation Employment Grant and support for downtown revitalization efforts in Edmonton and Calgary.

The Ministry will continue to implement Alberta's Investment and Growth Strategy including a focus on attracting investment in key industry sectors. Amongst other programs, funding for investment attraction is provided through the Alberta Technology and Innovation Strategy (\$67.5 million over three years), the Investment and Growth Fund (\$45 million over three years), and support for the Alberta Technology and Innovation Strategy (\$73 million over three years).

Justice and Solicitor General

The 2022 budget for Justice and Solicitor General includes:

- \$10 million for the Rural Alberta Provincial Integrated Defense (RAPID) Response, which expands the authorities of peace officers to respond to calls and assist police services in emergency situations (no change from 2021-22).
- \$49.1 million will be dedicated to deal with and investigate child pornography, gang violence, drug trafficking, stalking, human trafficking and domestic violence primarily through the Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams (12 per cent increase compared to 2021-22).
- \$5 million to expand Drug Treatment Court capacity.

To help address criminal court delays, the Ministry has developed a staged strategy for the hiring of 50 new prosecutors between 2020-21 to 2022-23. To date, 40 new prosecutors have been hired and 20 articling students have been accepted.

A new service delivery model for victims of crime is being established, with the current financial benefits program to be replaced with a new victim assistance program. The Ministry budget shows \$63 million available annually from the Victims of Crime and Public Safety Fund over the next three years; however, it is unclear what amount will be used for the new victim assistance program now that the use of this fund has been expanded beyond solely serving victims of crime.

The budget for Public Safety increased from \$571 million in 2021-22 to \$597 million in 2022-23, which likely reflects the increase in RCMP salaries negotiated through the collective bargaining process. However, the budget does not appear to reflect the approximately \$80 million that would be owed as retroactive pay under the Provincial Police Service Agreement. Alberta Municipalities and Justice and Solicitor General, along with other provinces,

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territories, and municipal associations across Canada, have partnered to advocate that the federal government cover the costs of RCMP retroactive pay and we await a response from the federal government.

Funding for both the Municipal Policing Assistance Grant and the Police Officer Grant remain flat from last year's budget at \$59.2 million and \$30 million, respectively. Additionally, we have been informed that these grants will be combined into one grant, but we are not aware of the name at this time.

The Ministry's operating budget for 2022-23 is \$1.48 billion, compared to \$1.35 billion in 2021-22 (9.6 per cent increase).

Labour and Immigration

The Ministry leads the Alberta at Work initiative, which provides a framework to address current and long-term labour market challenges. \$15 million over three years has been allocated to provide labour market information to students, employees, and employers. Budget 2022 includes \$64 million to assist Albertans in finding and maintaining employment such as the Canada-Alberta Jobs Grant.

The Ministry's business plan highlights working with the Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council to advance anti-racism actions and promote welcoming and diverse communities throughout Alberta. Alberta Municipalities notes that the work of the Anti-Racism Advisory Council aligns well with our [Welcoming and Inclusive Communities](#) (WIC) initiative, which Alberta Municipalities has led since 2006. Alberta Municipalities plans to seek out new funding opportunities in 2022 to continue the breadth of programming and resources we offer to support municipal governments and communities in addressing issues of racism, discrimination, and social exclusion.

Municipal Affairs

Municipal Affairs is continuing a focus on reducing municipal red tape by:

- Completing its review of the *Municipal Government Act*, with a focus on regulations related to planning, development, and growth management; and
- Working with the Safety Codes Council to implement a renewed provincial accreditation framework for accredited entities to create more efficient approaches, such as risk-based inspections.

Other planned initiatives include:

- Working with municipal associations and municipalities to develop the allocation formula and program guidelines for LGFF; and
- Identifying \$1.9 million to support the Provincial Operations Centre's disaster response and coordination activities, including the Alberta Emergency Alert system and the 24/7 Watch Station.

Alberta Municipalities' advocacy on a member resolution calling for an increase to the 911 levy has paid off. The Ministry's budget includes a \$23 million increase in fee revenue and a corresponding investment into Alberta's 911 system annually over the next three years. We are working to determine how much of this funding will be available to municipalities that operate Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs).

The total operating budget for Municipal Affairs declines from \$1.8 billion in 2021-22 to \$1.1 billion this year. The reduction is primarily driven by the \$711 million reduction in MSI and the \$10 million reduction in the Alberta Community Partnership, which are explained earlier in this report.

Seniors and Housing

Budget 2022 maintains seniors' financial supports and provides funding for the implementation of the provincial affordable housing strategy. The budget will provide \$491 million in grants and \$20 million in low-interest home equity loans for low-income seniors. Also, a total of \$118 million in capital funding will be made available in the next three years to improve and expand affordable housing.

The table below shows the 2021-24 Seniors and Housing Capital Plan:

| \$ millions | 2021-22 Estimate | 2022-23 Budget | 2023-24 Forecast | 3-Year Total |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Affordable Housing Strategy | | | | |
| Affordable Housing Strategy | 20.0 | 39.9 | 58.10 | 118.0 |
| Other Programs | | | | |
| Affordable and Specialized Housing | 16.3 | 2.0 | - | 18.3 |
| Family and Community Housing | 1.7 | 0.4 | - | 2.1 |
| Indigenous Housing Capital Program | 10.0 | 10.0 | - | 20.0 |
| Seniors Housing | 25.9 | 11.5 | - | 37.4 |
| Preservation (Maintenance) | 38.1 | 23.3 | - | 84.7 |
| Total | 112.0 | 87.1 | 81.4 | 280.5 |

Despite capital investment under the provincial affordable housing strategy, the total capital investment in affordable housing will continue to decrease over the next two years, from \$112 million in 2021-22 to \$81.4 million in 2023-24 (27 per cent decrease). The strategy has identified a goal of supporting the development of 13,000 new affordable housing units over the next 10 years; however, it is unclear how this goal will be achieved if the province's capital investments continue to decrease.

Budget 2022 maintains 2021 operational funding levels for the Family Community Housing, Seniors Housing, Rental Assistance, and Specialized Housing programs. The budget also includes \$1.8 million in operating funding to support the implementation of the provincial affordable housing strategy, which commits to providing rental assistance to an additional 14,000 households over 10 years.

Service Alberta

Over the next four years, Service Alberta will invest \$390 million (\$150 million in 2022-23) to improve broadband services across the province and ensure that rural, remote, and Indigenous communities are included in the province's economic recovery.

Service Alberta also identified \$10.1 million for registry transformation projects to offer more registry services online and \$9.1 million to improve the Land Titles service model and reduce application backlogs.

Transportation

Transportation manages several grant programs that municipalities access, including the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program (STIP), the Alberta Municipal Water/Wastewater Partnership (AMWWP), Water for Life, and the First Nations Water Tie-In Program, in addition to administering the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund (CWWF) on behalf of the federal government. Of note in the Ministry's business plan is \$474 million over the next three years that has been allocated for the Springbank Offstream Reservoir flood mitigation project. Also, provincial highway maintenance has increased from \$318.8 million in Budget 2021 to \$345 million in Budget 2022.

Treasury Board and Finance

The Government of Alberta has established three key anchors to guide fiscal decision-making:

- Keeping net debt-to-GDP under 30 per cent;
- Getting per capita spending in-line with comparator provinces; and
- After the pandemic, re-establishing a commitment to balance the budget.

The Ministry has expressed a commitment to maintaining fiscal discipline and controlling spending to support the government's fiscal targets, as well as working closely with Ministries to ensure adequate funding to deliver on the commitments the provincial government has made to Albertans.

In January 2022, [Alberta Municipalities reported](#) on how the province has backtracked on promises made in 2019, when it chose to dissolve the Alberta Capital Finance Authority. As the province has now stopped offering below-market rate loans to municipalities, Alberta Municipalities now very alarmed that the 2022 Fiscal Plan projects the province's investment income from loans to local authorities will increase by 180 per cent over the next three years. This would be a blatant case of cost downloading from the province to municipalities, along with their residents and local businesses.

A note on red tape reduction

Budget 2022 and the provincial government's business plans highlight red tape reduction as a top priority for this government. Many Ministries plan to review and revise legislation, regulations, and policies to reduce red tape by at least one-third. The objectives are to streamline legislation and regulatory requirements to reduce unnecessary barriers to stimulate the economy and create jobs. The Government of Alberta will continue to engage with industry stakeholders, municipalities, non-profits, and the public to pursue further opportunities for red tape reduction. The provincial government is committed to the provisions of the *Red Tape Reduction Act*, including regular reporting, and ensuring the ongoing coordination of cross-government innovation.



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