

April 5, 2006

Government promotes regional water systems

Edmonton... The Alberta government is encouraging the development of regional municipal water and wastewater systems by funding a larger share of their capital costs.

Under the new \$54-million Water for Life - Regional Water and Wastewater Partnership Initiative, the Alberta government will cover 90 per cent of the capital costs of building regional municipal water and wastewater pipelines. Under previous arrangements, government picked up 10 to 85 per cent of these costs, depending on the size of the municipality.

"Regional systems make economic sense, especially for smaller communities," said Ty Lund, Acting Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. "Many of our smaller communities have limited resources and regional systems eliminate the need for them to build, maintain, and operate expensive facilities."

The new initiative will be part of the existing Alberta Municipal Water/Wastewater Partnership and is also part of the overall Water for Life Strategy adopted by the Alberta government in 2003. The new initiative also will provide 100 per cent funding for engineering feasibility studies for regional systems, plant expansions for "hub" suppliers required to serve new regional customers, and expanding pipeline capacity to serve future regional customers.

"Alberta's municipal drinking water already exceeds national standards, and our priority is to make sure this continues," said Guy Boutilier, Minister of Environment. "Regional water systems are another example of how government and communities work together to provide safe, secure drinking water for Albertans."

In addition to the new regional initiative, the government also will invest \$126 million in regular Alberta Municipal Water/Wastewater Partnership grants over the next three years.

"This new initiative is indicative of the provincial government's ongoing commitment to provide support for the development of regional partnerships," said Rob Renner, Municipal Affairs Minister. "Initiatives like this are key to Alberta's future and demonstrate clearly that we all benefit from working together."

Existing regional water and wastewater systems currently serve 148 Alberta communities.

- 30 -

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