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Busy year planned for Alberta's highways

More than 1000 kilometres of highway to be paved, including 270 kilometres of new highway to be open by fall

Edmonton... As the province gears up for another season of road construction, this year is expected to be one of the busiest on record.

The Alberta government will invest a record \$1.1 billion this year to build, repair, and maintain the province's highway network. The 2006-07 investment marks an increase of approximately \$300 million or 37 per cent from last year.

"Some of the increase will cover cost escalation from previous commitments," explained Ty Lund, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. "However, we're also investing more in our highways to respond to the tremendous growth Alberta is experiencing and to support our province's strong economy."

Construction highlights for the 2006 season include:

- Paving more than 1,000 kilometres, including 250 kilometres of new paved road; twinning 20 kilometres; repair and rehabilitation of 425 kilometres; and widening 100 kilometres
- Completing five interchanges and starting two others;
- Chip seal coating 500 kilometres;
- Grading 100 kilometres.

Major projects include the ring roads in Calgary and Edmonton and Highway 63 in and around Fort McMurray.

"Improving infrastructure also makes highways safer, which is a priority for this government," added Lund.

On average, paving reduces collisions by 29 per cent, twinning reduces collisions by 47 per cent, and interchanges reduce collisions at intersections by 44 per cent.

There are approximately 31,000 kilometres of provincial highways in Alberta, of which more than 26,000 kilometres are paved. There are approximately 3,800 bridge structures on the province's highway network.

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Media enquiries may be directed to:

Bart Johnson
Communications Director
Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation
(780) 415-1841

To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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