

Memorandum

From: Kate White
Deputy Minister

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To: Aaron Roth
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Subject **Public Accounts – Written Response**

During the May 24, 2022, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts regarding Jobs, Economy and Innovation's 2020-21 Annual Report, the Committee requested department representatives provide written follow-up responses to certain questions asked at the meeting. I am pleased to provide the attached responses to those questions on behalf of the Ministry.

Please contact Ms. Sonya Johnston, Assistant Deputy Minister & Senior Financial Officer, should you require further clarification.


Kate White

Attachment: Written Responses to PAC 2020-21 Questions cc:

Shannon Phillips
MLA Lethbridge-West, Chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Sonya Johnston
Assistant Deputy Minister & Senior Financial Officer, Jobs, Economy and Innovation

Rick Christiaan
Chief Executive Officer, Invest Alberta Corporation

2020-21 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE – May 24, 2022

Jobs, Economy and Innovation

Written Responses

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Expenses for Minister/Political Staff – Invest Alberta Corporation – Mr. Bilous – (PA – 762)

Q1. Mr. Bilous: If you could break down how much was spent at The Guild and then if you have detailed expenses for ministers specifically and political staff outside of staff at Invest Alberta in writing, that would be wonderful. (PA - 761) (Expense for the Guild was answered as per PA – 762)

Answer:

No expenses were incurred for Ministers or political staff outside of staff with Invest Alberta for the 2021 fiscal.

All hospitality expenses – Invest Alberta Corporation – Mr. Bilous – (PA – 764)

Q2: Mr. Bilous: Okay. I'd like to go back to Mr. Christiaanse for questions. First, I appreciate you've talked about the first nine months of expenses, but can you table – well, table is probably the best way of framing it – all hospitality expenses for Invest Alberta? I'd also like for the committee to have which were covered by the department, which were covered by the deputy's office, and which were covered from other expenses as far as hosting and hospitality. (PA – 764)

Answer:

Total hospitality expenses for the 2021 fiscal year covered by the Invest Alberta was - \$1,244.92

These expenses covered eight events where Invest Alberta staff met with potential investors and/or other stakeholders.

Agreement with DLA Piper – Invest Alberta Corporation – Mr. Bilous – (PA – 764)

Q3: Mr. Bilous: Okay. Beginning on page 112 of the annual report, we see some financial information about Invest Alberta; however, it's pretty short on details. I'm looking to understand those numbers. Now, I understand that Invest Alberta entered into an agreement with DLA Piper. I'm curious to know how much it was for, what it was for, and was that a sole-source contract or was it put out to tender? (PA – 764)

Answer:

As part of standing up Invest Alberta, legal counsel was sought to give expert legal opinions, provide best practices, and protect the agency. Services provided by lawyers and notaries are a procurement exception in the New West Partnership Trade Agreement. Invest Alberta undertook a limited competition and selected the best-scoring proponent for our legal services. We entered into an agreement to pay the agreed upon hourly rate for the external legal services.

Analysis to use outside legal entities – Invest Alberta Corporation – Mr. Bilous – (PA – 765)

Q4: Mr. Bilous: You talked about conducting analysis. Could you table that analysis to this committee as far as looking at those two different options? (PA – 765)

Answer:

Hiring external legal counsel is a common and prudent business practice for start-up and scale-up organizations.

For the 2021 fiscal, Invest Alberta required legal counsel to support the immediate needs of standing up a Crown corporation.

The corporation weighed the options of hiring an internal team of legal experts or contracting outside counsel. The analysis informed the decision to hire outside legal counsel:

- It was determined that processes involved in hiring an internal team of legal experts would cause an unacceptable delay in start-up operations and negatively impact the corporation's ability to deliver on its mandate.
- It was determined that an internal legal team would not meet the required standard for independent, specialized review of essential contracts associated with start-up operations, such as regulatory considerations, legislative alignment, and fiduciary and financial matters including insurance and banking;
- It was determined that contracting outside legal counsel would be necessary to execute these operations.
- It was determined that outside legal counsel could help further safeguard the public interest by assisting in the review of the corporation's business interests including the creation and negotiation of memorandums of understanding with legal representatives of investor stakeholders, to help attract high-value, high-impact investment into the province.

Jason Dehni Contract – Invest Alberta Corporation – Mr. Bilous – (PA – 766)

Q5: Mr. Bilous: Great. Thank you, Chair. I want to understand the staffing model of Invest Alberta. Much of the criticism is that we had officials in the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Innovation: they moved to Invest Alberta with huge salary increases, no expense controls, no FOIP, and then some talented folks who made it over there on merit were let go for folks with less experience. This is all about how our tax dollars were expended. A few questions on this.

First, I understand that Jason Dehni was paid a contract worth more than the deputy minister here, was paid a contract to work three days a week. Please explain that to me. What was he paid? Why pay him more than the deputy minister for less work for an organization that was spun off from the department? (PA – 766)

Answer:

Mr. Dehni was engaged by Invest Alberta to assist in developing the corporation's financial services technology start-up industry outreach. Mr. Dehni has a proven track record of successfully advising, building start-ups in these industries across North America and Asia.

During the 2020-2021 fiscal Mr. Dehni was on an employment contract for the period February 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021. As Mr. Dehni was on an employment contract and his salary was below the disclosure threshold we are unable to disclose his salary.

Employee Compensation – Invest Alberta Corporation – Mr. Bilous – (PA – 767)

Q6: Mr. Bilous: We have FTE counts in the budget, on schedule 21 of the fiscal plan, every year, but this high-level information tells us very little, so I want to know more. How many employees left the ministry to work for Invest Alberta? What percentage of the workforce does that make up within Invest Alberta? And, most importantly, what was the percentage increase in their compensation overall when they moved over? If you can, again, table that information within 30 days, that would be wonderful. (PA – 767)

Answer:

Three employees were transferred or seconded from the Department of Jobs, Economy and Innovation (JEI) to Invest Alberta during the 2021 fiscal year. All other employees were hired through open recruitment processes.

This represented 14% of the Invest Alberta workforce at the end of the 2021 fiscal. Invest Alberta employed 21 individuals at this time.

JEI's employment compensation is not available to Invest Alberta, however, the following utilizes publicly available data:

- JEI's total compensation for employees transferred/seconded to IAC in 2020-21 - \$683,656.68
- IAC total Compensation for employees transferred/seconded from JEI in 2020-21 - \$503,390.59

Board Meeting Minutes – Invest Alberta Corporation – Mr. Bilous – (PA – 769)

Q7: Mr. Bilous: Okay. I appreciate that. So we can expect that within the next 30 days as well, or can I request that the board meeting minutes also be tabled to the Public Accounts Committee, please? (PA – 769)

Answer:

Invest Alberta's Board of Directors chose to publish its meeting minutes online. The Board of Directors' meeting minutes have been publicly posted on the InvestAlberta.ca website:

<https://investalberta.ca/about/invest-alberta-board/board-meeting-minutes/>

International Office Closure – The Department (the international offices) – Mr. Bilous – (PA – 769)

Q8: Mr. Bilous: It looks like next year we're going to have a Groundhog Day PAC meeting.

Talking a little bit about the trade offices, they were completely gutted in the first year. A number of questions. How many offices were closed? Ms White: Okay. I'll take the first part of that question if I could, MLA Bilous. When the offices were transferred over to Invest Alberta, it is correct to say that several managing directors were recalled or their contracts were not renewed. I believe this affected five to six, but we'll confirm in writing. (PA – 769)

Answer:

In 2020-21, none of Alberta's international offices were closed, however, the Government of Alberta did make the decision to evacuate some of its executive managers from their international posts in direct response to Global Affairs Canada recommendations for posted staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. Office staffing numbers were also evaluated during this time and, in some cases, were reduced due to decreased in-market activity.

In total, five executive managers were evacuated across Alberta's international office network. During this period, the operations of the affected international offices continued to be maintained and managed remotely from Alberta.

Office Position count 2020-21 to 2021-22:

Office	2020 Position count	2021 Position count
Beijing	7	3
Shanghai	2	2
Hong Kong	3	2
Japan	5	4
Guangzhou	1	1
Singapore	3	2
Mexico	2	2
New Delhi	3	2
Taiwan	1	1
Washington	5	4
London	3	3
Seoul	4	3

The Government of Alberta is currently reassessing its representation internationally to further advance its trade, investment and advocacy initiatives.

Supports to Multiple Projects – Invest Alberta Corporation – Ms Pancholi – (PA – 769)

Q9: Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to speak quickly so it'll all be on the record.

Can the ministry table information related to any support given by Invest Alberta to each of the following projects, including any MOU that was signed. The projects are Dow, Air Products, Mitsubishi, Northern Petrochemical, Mphasis, Infosys, Binance, AWS, or Fortune Minerals. (PA – 769)

Answer:

As many of the companies we support are publicly traded and operate in competitive business environments, Invest Alberta's support for deals is often commercially confidential information. We provide concierge services to help resolve barriers to investment, and our clients have announced more than \$20 billion in investments to the province since Invest Alberta was created in July 2020.

As is general business practice, our MOUs frequently have a clause that require permission from both parties to be made public. We have permission to make public the following MOU:

- Northern Petrochemical Corporation – Invest Alberta signed an MOU with the company to support their continued investment in the province and will work towards securing a final investment decision for the facility. Construction of the proposed complex is estimated to start in the summer of 2023. The project is expected to create up to 4,000 near-term construction jobs and 400 permanent full-time jobs once operational in the region.

Application Process for the Investment and Growth Fund – Invest Alberta Corporation – Ms Pancholi – (PA – 769)

Q10: Ms Pancholi: Please table with the committee the application process for the investment and growth fund at Invest Alberta and how many applications were reviewed, what percentage of applications were successful, if the Auditor General reviewed this process, as well as how and where geographically funds have been expended? (PA – 769)

Answer:

The Investment and Growth Fund (IGF) is run by the Department of Jobs, Economy and Innovation. Invest Alberta supports clients in accessing programs and services, including the IGF, that land important job-creating investment into Alberta.

- The Investment and Growth Fund (IGF) program is a targeted, deal-closing fund used to incentivize companies from outside Alberta to invest in Alberta. It is a precision tool designed to be offered in select late-stage investment discussions only (i.e. not intended for mass application) to provide a final push to bring impactful investments to Alberta that offer significant job creation and capital investment.
- Access to the IGF is available only through invitation by the Invest Alberta Corporation (IAC), which acts as the marketing arm and public face for the program. IAC investment advisors are responsible for identifying program-fit projects through extensive engagement with their clients prior to inviting a company to apply for IGF support.
- Both the company/investor and project must meet identified program eligibility criteria to qualify for an invitation to apply for IGF support.
- The company/investor must demonstrate it is well-established and financially sound (able to provide audited financial statements showing sound financial status for the preceding three years), and its project must represent new investment from outside Alberta (or a local company actively considering expansion outside of Alberta).
- Eligible applicants must provide evidence of a competing jurisdiction, meaning Alberta and at least one other jurisdiction are actively being considered for the investment.
- The investment project must create a minimum of 25 new, permanent full-time jobs at average or above average salary levels, and commit a minimum of \$15 million in capital expenditures, in addition to having a start date within 6 months of grant execution. The Minister may consider projects creating fewer than 25 jobs (minimum of 15 jobs) and/or capital expenditures less than \$15 million if the projects meet other program criteria and provide significant economic impact.
- If IAC determines the project is a suitable fit for IGF funding, the potential investor is invited to provide more information about their company and the project.

- The department manages the evaluation, decision-making and grant execution processes. Eligible applications are evaluated by JEI using a rigorous assessment tool that measures project details against program metrics and recommends an IGF grant amount ranging from \$500,000 to \$5 million. Final funding decisions are made by the Minister of JEI.

The program was officially launched in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Licensed Child Care Programs and SMERG – The Department – Ms Pancholi – (PA – 769)

Q11: Ms Pancholi: Please table with this committee the number of licensed child care programs that were eligible and received SMERG, including a breakdown by nonprofit and for-profit programs, including how much of the SMERG in total went to licensed child care programs. (PA – 769)

Answer:

- Grant payments issued through the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Relaunch Grant (SMERG) – are publicly disclosed on the Grant Payments Disclosure site (<https://www.alberta.ca/grant-payments-disclosure.aspx>).
- The SMERG program used a streamlined application process, only collecting data from applicants that was needed to administer the program.
 - Childcare providers eligible for the program were not required to disclose whether or not their facility was licensed with the province. As a result, there is not any data available to report the results as requested (i.e., the number of licensed child care programs that received funding through the program and a breakdown of non-profit and for-profit programs).
 - Applicants to the SMERG program were asked to self-select an industry sector that they felt was the best fit for their business activities. Of the applications received, 1,080 organizations that self-selected as being part of the Educational Services and Social Services sectors were provided with SMERG funding, amounting to a combined total of \$10.8 million in grant funding.
 - Approximately 920 applications, representing 85 per cent of the applications received for the Educational Services and Social Services sectors, were from for-profit organizations.
 - The remaining 160 applications received for these sectors identified as non-profit organizations.

GBA Plus or Diversity and Inclusion Assessment on the Economic Recovery Plan – The Department – Ms Pancholi – (PA – 769)

Q12: Ms Pancholi: When this committee last met with the ministry of culture and status of women, they advised that they did not conduct a GBA plus or diversity and inclusion assessment on the economic recovery plan, that JEI was the lead, so please table with this committee the GBA plus or diversity and inclusion assessment that was done on the economic recovery plan released in the fiscal year in question and specifically: if it was done, why did the economic recovery plan include nothing with respect to targeted at women, who actually experienced the greatest job loss during the pandemic? (PA – 769)

Answer:

- In 2020-21, the department assessed Alberta's Recovery Plan supports for women with cross ministry partners, including the ministry of Culture and Status of Women.
- As a result of this work, specific supports for women were launched under Alberta's Recovery Plan as part of the new Women's Economic Recovery Program (WERP) in 2021-22: :

WERP - STEM Grant:

- \$1 million was disbursed to support post-secondary bursary programs for women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) at three colleges.
 - Bow Valley College in Calgary and NorQuest College in Edmonton each received \$400,000, and Yellowhead Tribal College in Edmonton received \$200,000.
- The bursaries will help students cover a portion of their tuition and fees, as well as pay for services needed to help them succeed in their studies, such as childcare, transportation and technology.

WERP - Challenge Grant:

- A total of \$3.6 million was made available to solicit creative solutions from non-profit organizations for challenges that address women's economic development issues, such as job loss due to automation, mentorship, networking, skills training or other items.
- 20 non-profits in communities across Alberta received between \$25,000 and \$250,000 in funding to address specific barriers and enhance economic opportunities for women and girls.
- Recipient projects included STEM training and mentoring, digital literacy, career planning, and employment and entrepreneurship skills campaigns.

WERP - Capital Growth Initiative:

- \$6 million was provided to two non-profits to increase access to capital and wrap-around services that support women entrepreneurs.
 - With combined provincial reach, Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) and Community Futures Network of Alberta (CFNA) each received \$3 million.
- The funding will be used to provide conditionally repayable loans (from \$10,000 to \$75,000) and supports to women entrepreneurs, including business advisory services and specialized training.
- The program will improve access to capital for women entrepreneurs and provide a legacy of benefits as repaid funds are loaned out to other women entrepreneurs.

JEI's Support in Child Care Pilot Program – The Department – Ms Pancholi – (PA – 769)

Q13: Ms Pancholi: Similarly, can the ministry table with this committee any analysis or advice given by JEI to the Ministry of Children's Services on the decision to end the \$25-per-day child care pilot program in the fiscal year in question. The ministry, JEI, will be well aware that that program was key to increasing job creation, economic growth, workforce participation, definitely things that JEI should be concerned about, so what support or advice did your ministry provide to Children's Services around the end of that \$25-per-day pilot program? (PA – 769)

Answer:

- The \$25 per day pilot program improved affordability for a very small number of Albertans, creating an unfair system where government funding supported the child-care fees of a select few.
 - In March 2020, there were 2,777 licensed child-care programs in Alberta. Of these, 122 programs were able to participate in the pilot program, amounting to approximately 7,500 eligible children.
 - Currently, under the Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care agreement, all licensed child-care centres that serve children aged 0 to Kindergarten age are eligible.
 - This means that every child aged 0 to Kindergarten age in a licensed program is paying less than \$25 a day on average, with many families paying even less. Fees will continue to decrease to an average of \$10 a day by 2026.
 - Approximately 90,000 children and their families are currently benefiting from this federal-provincial agreement.

Investment in the Economic Recovery Plan on Child Care – The Department – Ms Pancholi – (PA – 769)

Q14: Ms Pancholi: Similarly, why was there no investment in the economic recovery plan on child care? The deputy mentioned \$130 million that was invested in child care; over \$100 million of that was invested by the federal government. There was almost nothing invested by the provincial government into child care at that time, so please provide an analysis of that. (PA – 769)

Answer:

- In 2020-21, Children’s Services (in partnership with the federal government) spent approximately \$130 million in relief funding to help licensed child-care programs stay open and keep the children and staff in child-care centres safe and healthy.
- The table below provides a breakdown of this \$130 million:

Type of Funding	Amount
Child Care Relief	\$30 million
Safe Restart Agreement	\$72.9 million
COVID relief	\$11.1 million
Critical Worker Benefit	\$15.7 million

Inclusive Employment – The Department – Ms Pancholi – (PA – 769)

Q15: Ms Pancholi: The deputy minister mentioned creating inclusive employment. Please table with this committee information about how many new positions were created with respect to inclusive employment, the list of employers that created these new positions, the total value, how it was funded, and the combination of provincial and federal funding. How will the success of that work be evaluated? (PA – 769)

Answer:

- Inclusive employment refers to all activities that enable individuals to gain and retain decent remunerated work. Inclusive employment means that nobody should be excluded from quality employment because of their disability or identification with marginalized groups.
- Employees in Alberta are not required to tell their employer about their disability or identification within any marginalized group. As a result, we do not have data on the number of positions created that are reflective of inclusive employment.
- Under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, employers have a duty to accommodate an employee who chooses to disclose a disability, which means employers must make every reasonable effort to meet the needs of a person living with a disability to get their work done and done well.
- Alberta's Recovery Plan provided the foundation for the Alberta Jobs Now Program (AJNP) announced in May 2021. AJNP is a \$370 million job-creating program delivered by Labour and Immigration. Funding for the program includes \$185 million of federal funding through the Workforce Development Agreement, as well as and \$185 million of provincial funding. Demographic data is being collected as part of this program and will include the number of hires that self identify as:
 - First Nations (status);
 - Immigrant;
 - Recent Immigrant;
 - First Nations (Non-status);
 - Metis and Inuit;
 - Person with Disability;
 - Youth (less than 25 years old); and
 - Mature worker (55 years and over).
- Inclusive employment data from the AJNP for the 2021-22 fiscal year will be available in the future.

Alberta Innovates' Accomplishment – The Department – Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk – (PA – 769)

Q16: Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Chair. Outcome 3 of the annual report was to optimize Alberta's innovation system to support economic growth. Page 4 explains that this ministry directed \$232.8 million to Alberta Innovates, innovation organizations and post-secondary institutions to streamline research, innovation and commercialization and offer programing to develop and advance talent, grow sectors, leverage funding, and attract investment.

Page 10 explains that "Alberta Innovates played an important role in the province's research and innovation system." Which results did Alberta Innovates achieve in '20-21? (PA – 769)

Answer:

A partial listing of results achieved by Alberta Innovates in the 2020-21 fiscal year is as follows:

- Alberta Innovates focused on accelerating the development of technologies for large-scale production of carbon fibre and advanced manufacturing products made from Alberta's vast reserves of bitumen.
- In July 2020, Alberta Innovates announced 17 successful funding recipients as part of its Digital Innovation in Clean Energy (DICE) competition, which aims to advance emerging technology in the resource industry. The awarded projects leveraged \$13 million from industry sources, or \$4.44 for each \$1 invested by Alberta Innovates.
- Alberta Innovates selected 23 shovel-ready projects aimed at economic development, job creation, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction through its Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction (TIER) Economic Recovery Program. The selected projects leveraged \$180 million from other sources or \$3.60 for each \$1 of TIER investment.
- Alberta Innovates launched the Smart Agriculture and Food Digitization and Automation Challenge in July 2020 to develop smart technologies that will sustainably increase productivity, reduce the cost of production, and increase the value of the agri- food industry. The program received 49 expressions of interest, with \$3 million in funding awarded to eight projects.
- Alberta Innovates' Technology Development Advisors supported 2,100 clients and held nearly 1,030 client meetings in 2020-21 by providing coaching, community and capital. This represented nearly double the number of clients and nearly 300 more client meetings when compared to the previous year.
- Alberta Innovates played a key role as a connector and catalyst in the creation of the not-for-profit Canadian Agri-Food Automation and Intelligence Network (CAAIN). The network, which connects and invests in Canada's agri-food and technology sectors to drive innovation and productivity, became fully operational in July 2020.

- Alberta Innovates also forged partnerships with national and provincial organizations to foster cross-jurisdictional partnerships and collaborations that will advance digital health in Alberta. These groups include the Canadian Institute for Health Research, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Research Data Canada, Canadian Data Platform, TELUS, Alberta Blue Cross, Health Quality Council of Alberta, Imagine Citizens, Canada Health Infoway and Cybera.
- Alberta Innovates developed a program to support the Government of Alberta's Natural Gas Vision and Strategy and committed more than \$10 million in 2020-21 for innovations in hydrogen production and use, methane utilization, plastics circularity, and carbon capture utilization and storage.
- Through its partnership with the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), Alberta Innovates started a new joint program called the NSERC Alliance – Alberta Innovates Advance Program. This program, which supported 33 projects in 2020-21, helps researchers in Alberta's universities to commercialize their innovations in advanced materials and manufacturing as well as information and communications technologies.
- Alberta Innovates also continued to support small and medium-sized enterprise investment readiness and connected companies with investors through their Capital Access and Scale-Up program. In 2020-21, Alberta Innovates provided investment readiness services to 10 scale-up ready firms.
- Alberta Innovates' hosted the 2020 INVENTURE\$ Unbound event, which was a resounding success attracting 10,000 online registrants from 60 countries and offering 105 sessions throughout 2020-21. These themed series and webinars included entrepreneurial topics, "show me the money" funding workshops and technical panels, while highlighting emerging social and technology trends such as women leading innovation, innovation of work, smart cities, and artificial intelligence.

Research Capacity program and Strategic Research Initiatives – The Department – Mr. Singh – (PA – 769)

Q17: Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. The major innovation fund, MIF, supports transforming research and innovation excellence to advance Alberta's priorities. Key objective 3.1 talks about ensuring that investment of public money has a clear return on investment. How do we know the major innovation fund, MIF, investments are the right ones for Alberta, and how has MIF enhanced Alberta's innovation competitiveness?

On page 33 of the annual report it elaborates on the research capacity program and strategic research initiatives. These initiatives provide funding to postsecondary institutions, and I see that in the 2020-2021 budget both initiatives had \$26.8 million in addition to the leverage from the federal matching program from the Canada Foundation for Innovation. Can the department elaborate on the importance of both initiatives? How does the research capacity program optimize postsecondary innovation? (PA – 769)

Answer:

- Programs such as the Research Capacity Program (RCP) and Strategic Research Initiatives (SRI) are key to cutting-edge academic research and innovation that not only helps inspire and cultivate brilliant minds, but is also critical for a thriving and globally competitive Alberta economy.
- The SRI supports the critical role of Alberta's Post-Secondary Institutions (PSIs) in the province's long-term economic recovery and as key elements of Alberta's advantage, which includes strengthening the province's innovation capacity and helping to fuel continued economic growth.
- The SRI ensures that Alberta continues to develop an international profile for the province and its best researchers through networks, industrial partnerships and technology development.
 - On average, SRI investments generate approximately \$3 to \$5 in partner funding for every dollar invested in Alberta's PSIs, while drawing and retaining talent to advance Alberta's technology sectors.
- The RCP invests in early, strategic research that positions the province to address priority areas of economic and social importance by enabling new technologies, companies, treatments for diseases and job opportunities.
- The RCP contributes to Alberta's innovation capacity by providing research equipment to Alberta's PSIs, supporting leading-edge research programs and attracting talent and federal funds.
 - In 2020-21, the RCP committed \$6.7 million over four years for 31 projects that leveraged over \$12.8 million in funding from partners, including the Canada Foundation for Innovation, industry, institutions, and non-profit organizations. The projects leveraged an additional \$2 in funding for every dollar invested through the RCP.

Travel Alberta's Role and Accomplishments – The Department – Mr. Toor – (PA – 769)

Q18: Mr. Toor: Thank you, Chair. The pandemic caused a significant shift in Travel Alberta's destination promotion plans and activities. I see on page 39 that in 2020-21, Travel Alberta was provided \$39.7 million to support the government's public health messaging and, as public health restrictions eased, to encourage Albertans to support local businesses and safely explore [our great] province.

Can the department further elaborate on Travel Alberta's role given that its mandate is expanding to become a destination management organization. What results did Travel Alberta achieve in 2020-21?

Also, can the department elaborate on its economic diversification and job-creation efforts? What are the other initiatives that Jobs, Economy and Innovation has undertaken to diversify Alberta's economy and support job creation? (PA – 769)

Answer:

- Travel Alberta's expanded mandate did not come into effect until the end of the 2020-21 fiscal year so at the time of this Annual Report, these changes were not yet in place.
- Travel Alberta still had a number of notable accomplishments in 2020-21:
 - When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, Travel Alberta prioritized the immediate needs of the tourism industry to support businesses and destination organizations while aligning with provincial health and safety requirements.
 - Travel Alberta also:
 - helped businesses navigate the pandemic and create the conditions for recovery and future success through programs, promotional activities and learning opportunities;
 - hosted 36 webinars for more than 5,200 attendees, covering a variety of topics to help tourism businesses navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - connected with more than 3,000 businesses and organizations to understand the immediate needs of the sector in the early days of the pandemic and to assess challenges and opportunities for destination development.
 - In April 2020, Travel Alberta collaborated with the Government of Alberta on a public safety campaign to bring over 112,000 snowbirds home from the U.S. and Mexico.
 - Travel Alberta supported the Government of Alberta's public health messaging with the "Stay Home. Stay Healthy." campaign to encourage Albertans to postpone travel plans.
 - Travel Alberta facilitated the distribution of nearly \$22 million in financial relief and assistance for tourism businesses and destination organizations across the province:

- The Travel Alberta Cooperative Investment Program invested \$6.2 million to support product development and marketing for 338 businesses across Alberta.
- Destination Canada’s Domestic Funding Program of \$4 million provided a one-time contribution to Alberta’s four largest destination management organizations.
- Travel Alberta and Western Economic Diversification Canada provided \$4 million in joint funding to nine primary destination management organizations servicing Alberta’s cities and the Rockies.
- The Government of Alberta provided an additional \$8 million to the five primary regional destination marketing organizations (Edmonton, Calgary, Banff, Jasper, and Canmore) to mitigate the financial impacts of COVID-19.
- Travel Alberta launched the “Worth the Wait” advertising campaign, which ran throughout the summer months of 2020. The campaign was centered on the value of Alberta’s tourism products and was designed to cultivate responsible inspiration to travel within the province and support local businesses. The advertising campaign featured 51 Alberta-based tourism businesses, resulting in increased traffic to the featured tourism partners’ websites with a combined increase of 265,000 website clicks.
- Travel Alberta created the “Alberta (re)Bound” strategy – a three-phase approach to help minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Alberta’s tourism industry, build resilience, accelerate recovery and prepare the province to welcome travelers back to Alberta in the future.
- Travel Alberta led eight training webinars for travel providers in Japan, Mexico, Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, the U.S., and Canada. The webinars attracted participation from more than 2,100 travel providers.
- In Spring 2021, Travel Alberta released its Bootstrap Plan to help achieve Alberta’s Recovery Plan outcomes. The Bootstrap Plan focused on three key pillars: marketing, access, and place.

Economic Diversification and Job-creation Efforts – The Department – Mr. Toor – (PA – 769)

Q19: Mr. Toor: Also, can the department elaborate on its economic diversification and job-creation efforts? What are the other initiatives that Jobs, Economy and Innovation has undertaken to diversify Alberta’s economy and support job creation? (PA – 769)

Answer:

Jobs, Economy and Innovation (JEI) is focused on creating the best economic conditions for businesses to thrive. We continue to promote Alberta as a destination for investment to create jobs and diversify our economy.

- JEI has a number of additional initiatives, including but not limited to the following, that are aimed at supporting long-term prosperity and economic diversification:
 - JEI developed the Investment and Growth Strategy, which:
 - is focused on fostering an economy that creates jobs and wealth while rebuilding Alberta’s reputation as the best and most responsible place to do business;
 - led to the creation of the Invest Alberta Corporation, an end-to-end concierge service delivery model for investors; and
 - included the launch of the Investment and Growth Fund – a deal closing incentive program that helps to attract private sector investment to Alberta that will create significant impact and economic benefits for the province.
 - JEI enhanced the Alberta Film and Television Tax Credit:
 - The \$10 million per project cap was removed to make the province an even more desirable location for larger film productions and create jobs.
 - 31 applications were approved in 2020-21 with an anticipated spend of \$122 million in Alberta.
 - These investments in 2020-21 have set the stage for the HBO production *The Last of Us*, which will become the largest film or television production in Canadian history filmed in Alberta.
 - JEI continues to provide support through the Major Innovation Fund:
 - This fund focuses on strategic research initiatives at Alberta’s post-secondary institutions that advance provincial priorities such as quantum technologies, antimicrobial resistance, artificial intelligence and autonomous systems.
 - Investments made through this program leverage federal investments and serve as a precursor to later-stage commercialization and additional investments from industry.
 - The ministry supported the launch of the Innovation Employment Grant:
 - The grant was launched in January 2021 to encourage economic growth by supporting small and medium-sized businesses that invest in research and development with a grant worth up to 20 per cent of qualifying expenditures.

- The ministry is the ambassador for the program, communicating and promoting the Innovation Employment Grant to innovative small and medium-sized businesses and related industry organizations.
- JEl provided funding for Alberta Innovates to deliver through its TIER Economic Recovery Program:
 - \$25 million was provided to Alberta Innovates for this program in 2020-21 as part of JEl's \$50 million investment in the program.
 - The \$50 million investment funds 23 projects that are anticipated to support 1,307 jobs and contribute \$169.2 million to the provincial GDP.
 - The program supports shovel-ready cleantech and energy projects that create jobs, accelerate innovation, enhance greenhouse gas emissions reduction, increase long-term economic competitiveness, and stimulate growth in critically important sectors of Alberta's economy.