

Speaking Points

Honourable Doug Horner
Minister of Advanced Education and Technology

THECIS Christmas Reception

Royal Glenora Club
11160 – River Valley Road
Edmonton, Alberta

Tuesday, December 16, 2008

7:00 p.m.

Introduction

- Thank you, Ken [*Gordon, Board Chair, THECIS*] and good evening everyone.
- It's wonderful to be here and see so many people who are so active ...and key...in Alberta's research and innovation system.
- This is a great opportunity to talk with all of you because some really exciting things are happening in our research and innovation system right now...

...and I'm eager to give you an update on them this evening.

Our Premier is Committed to Action

- It doesn't matter if you're an entrepreneur...or an investor ...or a researcher... or an academic...
- Alberta is...more than ever before...the place to be.
- Things are happening here.
- That's because Premier Stelmach has a vision for Alberta.
- The Premier's vision for our province requires a specific resource.
- A resource that Alberta is rich in.
- And I'm not talking about oil.

- I'm talking about a resource that never depletes itself.
- I'm talking about knowledge.
- In a global economy where knowledge has become the new wealth, Alberta is taking control of its own future.
- We're being smart and we're targeting key areas of growth.
- Some people have asked why Alberta is focusing on this direction, given the strength of our oil and gas sector.
- Why? Because we're business people at heart.
- We know that we need to build on what we already have.
- We're leveraging our traditional strengths to create the Next Generation Economy...one that is more diverse and more anchored by knowledge-based industries.
- In this challenging economic time...we're proving that we're focused on the long-term.
- We know what our priorities are to get there.
- Over the last few months alone, I've made several key announcements in our priority innovation areas, such as...

...a ground-breaking, large-volume carbon capture pilot project,

...our newest product development centre, ACAMP...the first of its kind in Canada...focused on advanced microsystems and nanotechnology products,

...a water research agreement with GE that will develop technology to improve the treatment and re-use of water in oil sands operations,

...a new \$20 million health research award at the University of Lethbridge... the largest in Canada,

...a new canola research project with Shanghai that will use leading-edge bioscience technology to benefit the environment while enhancing animal feed,

...and the Alberta 1,000 Plants Initiative...that could be the seed for a whole new bio-products industry.

- It's important to note that each of these announcements falls under one of our strategic priorities for research and innovation in Alberta.
- Each priority was well thought out...and was on target...before the current global economic situation unfolded.
- And each remains well thought out...and on target...despite the economic situation.
- Because each of these announcements is part of our long-term plan...

...which is to become one of the world's preferred locations for turning ideas into products and services.

- Premier Stelmach knows that's a realistic goal.
- He also knows...and I think this is key to his strength as a Premier...that a strong economy is not an end unto itself.
- Rather, a strong economy is the means to achieve the things we want as part of a larger global society...like strong health and education systems.
- I think people first knew things were changing just over a year ago when the Premier stood up at last year's ASTech Awards in Calgary.
- Some of you here tonight were there...and will remember when he said to the audience...

...The time for talk is over.

...It's time to act.

- He was talking about Alberta's commitment to the high tech future.
- You could have heard a pin drop in that room... a room filled with world-class researchers... top-level investors and entrepreneurs...university presidents... you name it.

Technology Commercialization Action Plan

- In June, he acted on that commitment and, together, we announced our \$178 million, 9-point technology commercialization plan...called *Bringing Technology to Market*.
- Each of the 9 strategies of the plan is strategically linked to the other.
- And that's what I've been told...over and over again...is our strong point.
- Since we announced our plan, we've heard from international experts...from California to China to Europe.
- They have told me that it's more than the fact that the individual pieces of the plan are solid... targeted...and well thought out.
- What really makes the plan stand out for them is that it's a coordinated approach that deals with all aspects of deal flow...from the beginning to the end of the entire development process....

...from attracting investors,

...to enhancing our already business-friendly tax environment,

...to building capacity.

Innovation Vouchers

- Just a couple of weeks ago, we rolled out one exciting element of the plan... a pilot program that will help Alberta innovators at a crucial time in their development process.
- I'm talking about our Innovation Vouchers...which are a Made-in-Alberta solution. In fact, I believe we're the first jurisdiction in North America to introduce such a program.
- These handy little vouchers will help young companies get the vital support they need...at a time when they really need it...during the pre-commercial to early start-up stages of development.
- Maybe they need help developing a business plan. Maybe they need guidance on intellectual property. Maybe they need access to a lab...or a manufacturing centre.
- They'll be able to redeem their voucher at any one of the approved service providers located across the province...to help them achieve their goals.
- We're going to offer the vouchers as a pilot project for two years...then look at what we've learned as we consider extending the program.
- We're accepting applications on our website...so if you know an Alberta innovator with 50 employees or less, please encourage them to check it out.

More Actions To Come

- Of course, our Innovation Vouchers are just part of the larger action plan that the Premier and I announced this past summer.
- We've already provided the funding to expand the IVAC Capacity Builder Program...which is helping early-stage companies in ICT, life sciences, clean energy, and nanotechnology get the best possible start in their fields.
- And in less than 3 weeks from now...our brand new, provincial Scientific Research and Experimental Development tax credit will become available to benefit these knowledge-intensive companies.
- The credit will be worth 10%...on top of the federal SR&ED tax credit...giving companies one more reason to do their research, development, and applications work in Alberta.
- In the near future, I also expect to announce the chair and board members of the new Alberta Enterprise Corporation.
- As 2009 unfolds, you'll be hearing from us again as we continue to roll out the actions in our tech comm. action plan...so stay tuned.

Integrated With Other Strategies/Programs

- There's one more thing I want to point out about our action plan.
- It doesn't exist out there...on its own...as a one-trick pony.

- Just as each of the nine actions in our tech comm. action plan works in harmony with the others...

...the action plan itself works in harmony with other strategies my ministry has developed for Alberta...such as Alberta's ICT strategy and our nanotechnology strategy.

- And...of course...you know about our work on another related strategy... a new framework to align our provincial research and innovation organizations.
- I'd like to take a few minutes to give you an update on where we're at.

Roles and Mandates Framework

- Our work began with the 2008 Throne Speech.
- Following that, Premier Stelmach mandated my ministry to develop a new framework for our research and innovation system in Alberta that will ...

...strengthen the development of world-class research and innovation in Alberta,

...increase the development and retention of highly qualified people, and

...support solutions to major opportunities and challenges facing Alberta.

- So we started our consultation with stakeholders. And we heard the same message over and over again... that the system needs to change.

- International boards of review that looked at AHFMR, Alberta Ingenuity, and ASRA told us the same thing.
- Many of you here tonight were part of our meetings with stakeholders in July and October...so you already know about our progress toward aligning our system.

Transition Process

- I can tell you that...with the support of our stakeholders...I'm currently in the process of sharing our proposal with my colleagues in government with very good feedback. I anticipate that process should be done in January.
- For those of you who weren't at the meeting in October, I can tell you that the new framework will focus on new and existing priorities where Alberta can get jurisdictional advantage and compete internationally.
- It will also ensure strategic, coordinated support specifically for:
 - ...Bioindustries (agriculture, forestry, and other life sciences),
 - ...Energy and the Environment,
 - ...Health, and
 - ...Support for Knowledge-Based Industries.

- So you see ... not only are we focusing on strategic priorities...we're also making sure those priorities reach industry...the companies and entrepreneurs who can deliver the benefits to Albertans.
- Over the next few months, we will continue working on the roles and functions and governance of the new framework...

...and we'll continue to work with a number of stakeholders in order to refine them further as we move toward implementation next year.

- My hope is that...with my colleagues' approval...I'll be able to bring forward legislation in 2009 to make the new framework a reality.
- My staff are also working on a number of related initiatives.
- One is the concept of Open Innovation...including intellectual property...which was identified by many stakeholders as a critical element for the new system to be effective.
- We will also be working with key stakeholders to further analyze where Alberta may have significant opportunities in research and innovation.

Vision for New Framework

- To summarize...with the new framework, we're building a pan-Alberta approach...
...a system of many organizations working together to capture value from research and innovation for economic and societal benefit.

- We will deliver on your desire to make our system ...
 - ...less complex,
 - ...more focused on our strategic priorities,
 - ...more consolidated, and
 - ...with less overlap and stronger links between the players.
- It will be more transparent for other government ministries and key stakeholders... so everyone can understand where they “fit”...and make sure their activities contribute effectively to the system as a whole.
- Finally, it’s a proposal that is robust and flexible enough to serve over the long-term...
 - ...so that even if government priorities change down the road, it will be strong enough to carry on with the Premier’s goals for Alberta’s future.
- This new framework is intended to support and enhance the roles of the excellent people we have already in Alberta.
- I didn’t want to bother you with a lot of policy talk this evening...
 - ...but things are really happening in our world...in your world.

- Two years ago, no one in Alberta was talking about the Next Generation Economy...about bringing technology to market...or about our knowledge-based future.
- Today, people are starting to talk about technology as the key to our energy future...as the key to diversification of our economy...as the next focus for our business community.
- This is a good time to be in this business in Alberta.
- You have a greater opportunity than ever to be part of a new direction in Alberta.
- Thank you for your kind attention...and I'd like to wish you all a very happy holiday season.
- I'd be happy to take any questions you may have and I'll do my best to answer them.

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