

ACA Promotes Growth in Capacity and Certainty for Alberta's Budget 2026

Alberta's construction industry remains foundational to the province's economic competitiveness, major project and procurement readiness, and ability to meet the demands of population growth. The Alberta Construction Association (ACA) supports the Government of Alberta in its continued investment in economic development and opportunities for our members.

We understand that within a fiscally restrained environment, governments need to focus and prioritize their spending. The current situation lends itself to such a prudent narrative. While this may be the case, Alberta has and will continue to face the realities of a growing population and economic opportunities that will shape the outlook for our province for years to come.

Record population growth, with over 202,000 new residents in 2023 alone, continues to strain already-stretched infrastructure systems: housing, schools, long-term care, hospitals, and municipal assets. The *BuildForce Canada 2025–2034* outlook identifies a need for 59,000 additional workers, including 43,400 workers retiring over the decade. Even with projected new entrants, Alberta faces a potential shortfall of 15,400 skilled workers. Alberta's economy also plays a frontline role in Canada's national defence and major-projects agenda, including:

- Energy-corridor upgrades and intertie expansion;
- Critical minerals extraction and processing facilities;
- Hydrogen, CCUS, and low-emissions industrial projects; and,
- Major federal transportation and defence-procurement projects.

These initiatives add substantial pressure to an already tight labour market. Budget 2026 is a critical opportunity to support Alberta's growth and ensure a ready, skilled, and modern construction workforce. Skilled labour is critical to meeting the needs of our growth.

In consultation with our local construction members representing over 3,000 construction employers across Alberta's industrial, commercial and institutional sectors, the Alberta Construction Association respectfully submits the following recommendations for consideration in Budget 2026.

1. Strengthening Workforce Capacity

Alberta's construction workforce is aging at the same time demand is accelerating, creating a structural labour deficit that cannot be resolved without targeted long-term investment. Apprenticeship completions have not kept pace with retirements, meaning

Alberta risks losing practical mentorship capacity as experienced tradespeople exit the workforce. Without additional intake and stronger completion supports, Alberta will struggle to meet demand for housing, schools, health facilities, major industrial builds, and the defence-related infrastructure that will shape continental security over the next decade.

Strengthening workforce capacity is not simply an economic priority; it is essential to maintaining Alberta's competitiveness and ensuring project schedules remain feasible. Alberta's apprenticeship and skills-training system must scale to meet population pressures and the expanding national defence and major-project portfolio. It must be driven by industry employers who hire and retain our future journeymen.

Budget 2026 Recommendations

- Increase predictable, multi-year apprenticeship funding that matches employer demand.
- Continue to support growth in skilled trades training through investment in modern labs, workshops and facilities, such as NAIT's Advanced Skills Centre and Northwestern Polytechnic Skilled Trades Centre.
- Invest and grow the Alberta Trades Discovery Centre model, including establishing a northern regional hub in Edmonton in addition to the one planned in Calgary.
- Expand programs, such as Honour the Work, Dual Credit, Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP), and Career Pathways, to accelerate youth entry into construction-related trades.
- Reinvest in ACA's Trade Pathways model to serve unemployed youth, newcomers, and under-represented groups.
- Expand mentorship and work-integrated learning programs for women and youth.
- Support Indigenous education, regional training partnerships, and community-based delivery.
- Redesign Alberta Advantage Immigration Program, including dedicating a streamlined pathway for high-demand trades critical to infrastructure projects.

2. Capital Investment Certainty

Predictable capital planning enables companies to meet the demand of a growing population while keeping up with infrastructure upgrades and maintenance they need. Alberta's capacity to meet both local infrastructure needs as well as other provincial and national priorities requires stable, disciplined multi-year capital commitments.

Having a predictable capital plan will not only allow for continued employment, it also enables employers to hire apprentices, invest in mentorship, and modernize equipment and techniques. Volatility in capital schedules disrupts workforce planning and widens labour shortages.

Budget 2026 Recommendations

- Maintain predictable, multi-year capital plans through a funding formula developed in partnership with industry.
- Continue to increase capital and maintenance renewal funding for much-needed infrastructure upgrades to reduce our capital deficit.
- Ensure local and regional authorities can support their infrastructure needs through investment that matches the growth they are experiencing.
- Utilize the provisions under the *Real Property Governance Act* to ensure a long-term vision for Alberta's infrastructure is being implemented.

3. Procurement, Contracting, and Regional Participation

Procurement is one of the most influential levers the Government of Alberta holds to ensure overall project success. When tenders are clustered or timelines compressed, the province unintentionally limits small and medium-sized employers (SMEs) participation and reduces opportunities for apprentices to gain on-site experience that directly affect workforce outcomes.

Similarly, inconsistent or overly onerous risk transfer discourages bidding, elevates project costs, and can push contractors to reduce training commitments or digital investment. These issues have been magnified during a time of uncertainty and major project delivery, where predictable delivery windows are essential.

Budget 2026 Recommendations

- Increase regional opportunities on upcoming tender pipelines, where applicable.
- Harmonize procurement practices across ministries for clarity and efficiency.
- Promote fair risk allocation to aligns with the party best able to control and thereby reduces unnecessary increases in project cost..
- Encourage procurement models that support innovation, such as digital delivery of projects.

Through investments in Budget 2026, the Government of Alberta can ensure a resilient, competitive, and future-ready construction workforce, positioning the province as a national leader in infrastructure delivery and economic growth. The Alberta Construction Association stands ready to work with the province to achieve the mutually beneficial outcomes to build our province together.

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