

## **New Royal Alberta Museum to mirror Alberta's past, present, and future**

April 7, 2011

Edmonton... A new comprehensive Royal Alberta Museum will be built in downtown Edmonton starting this year, featuring twice as much gallery space, direct connections to public transit, proximity to the Arts District, and the ability to host major international exhibits and rare artifacts. The new museum will be equipped to showcase both Alberta's history and its natural wonders, and will be free of the limitations of the current museum site.

"Great urban centres around the world are known for their museums and cultural institutions. They help shape the character and fabric of a community, and bring the past to life," said Premier Ed Stelmach. "This is an unprecedented opportunity to create a new provincial museum in the heart of Alberta's capital city that will bring our province's past, present, and future to life in new and compelling ways."

In recent years, various plans for redeveloping the Royal Alberta Museum have been discussed, but these previous plans would have involved significant challenges. Due to space and accessibility constraints, it was not feasible to construct a comprehensive, state-of-the-art museum at the existing site. Redeveloping a museum of natural history at the current site would have required the museum to close for up to four years, with the human history collection remaining in storage indefinitely until a second, standalone museum could be constructed at a different location. Building a new museum in downtown Edmonton resolves all of these challenges by delivering a larger, more accessible Royal Alberta Museum for significantly less cost than developing two separate museums.

"This announcement puts to rest the challenges the museum has faced at the existing site. It will now be free to develop into a cultural institution well-equipped for the future—a museum with the room, accessibility, and connections it needs to become an iconic institution respected around the world," Stelmach emphasized.

The Alberta government is partnering with the City of Edmonton to acquire the site for the new museum, on the northeast corner of 103A Avenue and 99 Street.

"The new Royal Alberta Museum will complement the other facilities anchoring our vibrant arts district," said Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel. "It will also become a significant part of our vision to strengthen Edmonton's reputation of having one of Canada's most diverse and exciting cultural hubs. On behalf of the City of Edmonton, I thank the Province for their investment in Edmonton's future."

### **Advantages of the new Royal Alberta Museum include:**

- Enough space to exhibit the museum's human history and natural history artifacts in one facility.
- The ability to feature major international exhibits and to regularly bring in new displays and artifacts currently in storage.
- Direct links to the LRT pedway system and numerous bus routes.

- Room to accommodate thousands more visitors every year.
- Video conferencing and live streaming capabilities through the SuperNet, allowing the museum to connect with classrooms around the province and other museums and research institutions throughout the world.
- Proximity to the Arts District of downtown Edmonton, allowing for shared programs and promotions with nearby art galleries, concert halls, theatres, and libraries.
- Uninterrupted public access to the museum's displays and artifacts during the construction process.
- Potential for future growth with shelled-in space and enough land for expansion.

“For the last 44 years, the Royal Alberta Museum has preserved and told the stories of Alberta and Albertans, and through its travelling exhibitions brought the world’s history to our province,” said Minister of Culture and Community Spirit, Lindsay Blackett. “The new Royal Alberta Museum will build on that legacy in a shining example of new connectivity to our past and for our future, and will inspire Albertans—of all ages—to explore and understand the world around them.”

This spring, the provincial government will launch a unique competitive bidding process to hire a private sector consortium to design and build the new museum. The tendering process will include basic requirements and a fixed construction budget. The design and construction industry will then be given the opportunity to compete on innovation, aesthetics, and enhancements to the basic requirements. Strong emphasis will be placed on a design that reflects the identity of the province, fits in well within the Arts District, is energy efficient, offers room for expansion, and ensures artifacts are properly preserved and presented.

“We are going to challenge our community of talented designers and contractors to deliver a museum that reflects what our province has become and will become in the future,” emphasized Ray Danyluk, Minister of Infrastructure. “It will be a museum specifically developed to keep people coming back, with the capacity to continuously show Alberta’s growing history in motion.”

With its proximity to existing rail lines, the new museum site would also present a viable option for a high-speed train station if one were needed in the future. In 2007, the government purchased land near downtown Calgary for a future high-speed rail station. The museum site could act as a similar location for a future high-speed rail station in Edmonton. The current site in Glenora will continue to be used for public purposes. Government House will maintain its functions on the site and a new Lieutenant Governor’s residence will be constructed on the grounds.

## The New Royal Alberta Museum

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- The new museum will be located on the northeast corner of 103A Avenue and 99 Street. The Alberta government and the City of Edmonton are partnering to acquire the site.
- The site is part of Edmonton's Arts District (including Edmonton's Art Gallery, the Winspear Centre, and the Citadel Theatre).
- The new museum will be connected to the LRT through the existing pedway system.
- A parkade will also be constructed under the building. In the future, the site will have the potential to add a high-speed rail station.
- The museum will include 36,000 square metres of space, including an interactive children's pavilion and a gallery for international exhibitions. It will have enough space to display artifacts from both the museum's human history and natural history collections.
- By constructing a new facility, the museum will be able to continue operating without having to close for an extended period of time for redevelopment. Redeveloping the museum on the Glenora site would have required the museum to close for up to four years with all artifacts stored offsite.
- **The Royal Alberta Museum collection currently contains nearly 10 million objects including:**
  - o The largest public collection of early fur trade artifacts from the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company posts in western Canada, dating from 1790;
  - o 644,000 life sciences objects: Botany, Ichthyology/Herpetology, Invertebrate Zoology, Mammalogy and Ornithology- including the museum's highly-acclaimed live invertebrate gallery, The Bug Room, the first of its kind in western Canada;
  - o 7.9 million earth sciences objects: Archaeology, Geology, Quaternary Palaeontology, and Quaternary Environments;
  - o 141,000 human history objects: Ethnology, Cultural Studies (formerly Folk Life), Military and Political History and Western Canadian History; and
  - o 70,000 collections services objects: Collections Management, Conservation, Information Resource Management, Resource Library.
  - o Images Available at <http://www.infrastructure.alberta.ca>