



Alberta Support for Montana House Joint Resolution NO. 3

Mr. Leonard Mitzel

Member of Alberta's Legislative Assembly for Cypress-Medicine Hat

I would like to start by thanking Representative Musgrove for the invitation to come today and express Alberta's support for this Resolution. I would also like to pass along greetings from our new Premier, Ed Stelmach, who is committed to strengthening the Montana-Alberta relationship.

Much of what is being discussed here was born out of a meeting of the Montana-Alberta Bilateral Advisory Council (MABAC) last May here in Helena, and that says a lot about the importance these regular meetings and of Alberta's relationship with Montana. I hope many of you will be able to make it up to Alberta for the 2007 MABAC meeting [date and location still TBD].

Statistics Canada recently confirmed what many already knew, Alberta is in the midst of the strongest economic growth ever recorded in Canada, and it shows no signs of slowing down. This kind of economic growth creates a great deal of opportunity for Montana. In the past five years, two-way trade between Alberta and the U.S. has increased a remarkable 37%, reaching an all time high of \$68.9 billion US dollars in 2005.

As Alberta's only neighbouring state, Montana is uniquely poised to benefit from Alberta's prosperity and the trade it generates; provided the proper infrastructure is in place. Alberta's oil sands, the engine of our current economic growth, are located in north eastern Alberta, and a new 24-hour border crossing at Wild Horse would help create a new trade corridor through Montana direct to the oil sands.

Montana Sec Hwy 232 and Alberta Hwy 41 have lower traffic volumes than the existing route – Alberta Hwy 2 and I-15 in Montana which connect at the Sweetgrass Port of Entry. It would be advantageous for slower moving, heavy and wide loads to use this route. The frustration of presently moving through high populated areas like Calgary and Edmonton would certainly be lessened.

Alberta and the Midwestern and Southern States conduct a great deal of trade. Trucks destined for Alberta would be able to reach the Wild Horse border crossing via Sec Hwy 232 and then on to Hwy 41 with greater ease and less expense, saving both time and money.

When a major transportation grid is established whether in Alberta or Montana, the result is movement of traffic (in this case truck traffic) throughout the province or state, thus increasing the development and sustainability of our respective rural areas and communities. Economic development by infilling areas between these grid roads rather than focusing on one major route that is over capacity, will gradually benefit the entire Province or State.



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I don't want to leave the impression that the only benefit of a second 24-hour border crossing would be to facilitate the flow of goods into Alberta. As was evident last September, when a delegation of 15 Alberta energy executives toured eastern Montana, there is real potential for Alberta companies to invest in Montana. A second 24-hour border crossing at Wild Horse would greatly facilitate movement into eastern Montana, making the decision to invest there that much easier.

Alberta supports the establishment of a second 24-hour border crossing at Wild Horse. This was clear last April, when Motion 506, which this resolution makes reference to, and which I introduced, was unanimously passed by Alberta's legislature (a rare thing in politics).

Thank you.