

Alberta Announces AI Data Centres Strategy: A \$100-billion Vision For The Future



On December 4, 2024, the Alberta government [launched a strategy](#) aimed at making the province the most attractive place to build artificial intelligence (“AI”) data centres in North America (the “AI Strategy”).

The AI Strategy predicts that the global demand for data centre capacity could more than triple by 2030. Alberta’s Minister of Technology and Innovation, Nate Glubish, sees Alberta as “perfectly positioned” to lead the “technological revolution” driven by advancements in AI. Minister Glubish wants to attract \$100 billion of private investment into data centres over the next five years.

Announcements have already begun on large projects in Alberta. On October 29, 2024, eStructure Data Centres announced [plans to build a 90MW CAL-3 hyperscale facility](#) north of Calgary in Rocky View County. On December 9, 2024, the Municipal District of Greenview and Canadian entrepreneur Kevin O’Leary announced ambitious [plans to develop the world’s largest AI Data Centre Industrial Park](#) near Grand Prairie and named “Wonder Valley.” The parties have stated that the total investment for the Wonder Valley Industrial Park and all ancillary infrastructure could be more than \$70 billion.

The Alberta advantage

The AI Strategy highlights the province’s unique natural resources and regulatory advantages, claiming Alberta as an attractive place to build and operate an AI data centre. The province is touting its abundant natural gas reserves that provide a scalable and reliable power supply for energy-intensive data centre facilities. In addition, Alberta’s energy-only electricity market with private investment in new power generation, allows companies to meet their own power needs.

Alberta’s cold climate will permit the efficient cooling of servers, minimizing the need for costly artificial cooling systems and reducing overall energy consumption – lowering both operational expenses and making the facilities more sustainable.

The province has also highlighted its low corporate tax rate and claims that it has, and will continue to, significantly reduce red tape to streamline regulatory approvals and improve operational efficiency.

Alberta's strategic pillars

To ensure that Alberta is an “investment-ready environment” for AI data centres, the AI Strategy outlines a focus on three core pillars: power capacity, sustainable cooling and economic growth.

The first pillar focuses on supporting high-capacity power solutions for AI data centres. To achieve this, Alberta plans to leverage its natural gas reserves while integrating renewable energy and carbon capture technologies. In addition, the province will prioritize both off-grid and grid-connected solutions to avoid compromising the affordability or reliability of electricity.

The second pillar leverages Alberta's natural advantages like a cold climate and water resources combined with the opportunity to collaborate with local companies to develop next-generation cooling technologies.

The third pillar focuses on keeping Alberta's competitive advantage from the lowest taxes in Canada while, at the same time, creating opportunities for local companies, driving job creation and expanding the province's technology sector.

The path forward

To achieve the goals outlined in the AI Strategy, Alberta has indicated that it will undertake a series of key initiatives. The first initiative is related to regulatory modernization, which will include a comprehensive review of regulatory timelines related to AI data centre development. The aim will be to reduce delays and shorten timelines for investment decisions and construction and provide greater investor certainty. This includes creating an AI data centre concierge program designed to work hand-in-hand with potential project proponents, including by streamlining partnerships and leveraging existing infrastructure to help proponents meet requirements.

The provincial government has also indicated its desire to partner with Indigenous communities and municipalities. Alberta states it will ensure inclusive growth by prioritizing economic development opportunities with Indigenous communities through programs such as Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation. By working with local governments, Alberta states it will identify opportunities, offer support, and align local resources to attract investment and accelerate project implementation.

The last key initiative involves enhancing Alberta's leadership in AI and machine intelligence to support key industries and post-secondary institutions. This includes new programs and funding opportunities to support Alberta-based innovation in the AI-driven economy.

Legal considerations

Data centres are large, complex and energy-intensive infrastructure projects and Alberta's AI Strategy is ambitious. Stakeholders will need to continue tracking how initiatives under the AI Strategy are actually implemented.

Even if the province streamlines regulatory processes and offers greater assistance to project proponents, there will be a plethora of unique legal considerations for stakeholders. These considerations relate to taxes, land use and zoning, utility and energy regulatory requirements, intellectual property and privacy regulatory requirements, construction and development contracting, security, insurance, and Indigenous and other stakeholder consultation and engagement.

Our lawyers are tracking these developments in relation to data centre build-outs across Canada. We encourage those looking to build or invest in data centres, or adjacent energy or technology infrastructure, to reach out to [our Energy team](#).

The content of this article is intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter. Specialist advice should be sought about your specific circumstances.

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