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***Improving Albertans' quality of life***

*April 25, 2007*

## **Alberta allocates \$50 million to fight mountain pine beetle**

*Edmonton...* The Alberta government has directed \$50 million in emergency funding to continue aggressive action against the mountain pine beetle infestation in the province.

Beetle-attacked trees in Alberta jumped to an estimated three million in early 2007 - compared to 20,000 a year earlier - following a 'beetle rain' last July from populations in northeastern British Columbia.

"The front line in the war against mountain pine beetle has moved from B.C. to Alberta," Sustainable Resource Development Minister Ted Morton said. "This emergency funding gives us the resources we need to continue the fight against this threat to our forests."

The \$50 million in emergency funding for Sustainable Resource Development's 2007-08 budget will be used for control measures to remove beetle-killed and at-risk trees, and to continue surveys to detect infestations.

The ministry's goal is to remove as many infested trees as possible before the next beetle flight this July. Each infested tree contains enough beetles to attack five to 10 more trees. At risk are six million hectares of pine forest in Alberta - about 15 per cent of the province's total forest - as well as the viability of the province's forest industry, sustainability of communities, watersheds, crucial wildlife habitat, recreational access and tourism.

Sustainable Resource Development is also implementing strategies to grow a younger, more resilient forest that will be better able to withstand wildfires and insect attacks.

Implementing an aggressive strategy to protect the health of Alberta's forests is one of the key actions under Premier Ed Stelmach's plan to improve Albertans' quality of life. Other priorities for the government are to manage growth pressures, govern with integrity and transparency, build a stronger Alberta and provide safe and secure communities.

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