



## President Mahon Statement on 2016/17 provincial budget and approval of Destination Project funding

Earlier today, as part of the 2016/17 provincial budget, the Government of Alberta announced it has increased its funding commitment towards the construction of the Destination Project science building at the University of Lethbridge, and that \$125 million in funding for this project has been moved up to this year. This will allow the U of L to begin construction on this project immediately.

The Government of Alberta has committed \$248 million over the next four years to the Destination Project, complementing the \$12 million in planning funds the U of L has already received for a total provincial contribution of \$260 million.

The Destination Project is a transformational project for our university and southern Alberta, and the research, education, innovation and partnership initiatives this building will support promise to significantly enhance the further diversification of southern Alberta's economy.

The U of L has worked towards the realization of this moment for almost a decade. We are very grateful to Lethbridge-West MLA Shannon Phillips and Lethbridge-East MLA Maria Fitzpatrick for supporting us in demonstrating the need for this project. Further, on behalf of the University, I would like to thank members of our campus community, as well as business, educational, industry and community leaders across southern Alberta who have promoted the merits of this project for years.

In the short term, the construction of the Destination Project will stimulate the local economy by creating hundreds of jobs. Once constructed, the building will serve as the bedrock of Lethbridge's knowledge economy and will be a wealth creation tool for the province. New space for the sciences will enhance innovation and spur entrepreneurship through students who are trained in leading edge labs and through innovative new programs like AGILITY.

The U of L also applauds the Alberta government for its commitment to stable and predictable funding for the post-secondary sector by increasing the base-operating grant by two per cent and maintaining the backfill funds for the tuition freeze.

Universities and colleges will play a critical role in supporting the realization of a more diversified Alberta economy.

Finally, the U of L thanks the Government of Alberta for their investments in students including renewing expiring mental health grants for an additional year.

**President and Vice-Chancellor, Mike Mahon, PhD**