

Carney comes to Alberta, talks housing, rides a sprayer, hears from separatists

Published July 29, 2026 | Bill Graveland | The Canadian Press



RED DEER - Prime Minister Mark Carney came to the Alberta heartland Wednesday to announce housing money, sit shotgun on a canola sprayer and catch an earful — at a distance — from flag-waving separatists.

Carney, with Alberta Premier Danielle Smith at his side, announced \$510 million in federal funding for municipalities to build water and wastewater infrastructure to support new homes.

"Strong communities start right here, they start with housing," Carney told reporters.

"A home needs more than four walls.

"It also needs clean drinking water and a reliable sewage system."

Smith said Alberta will contribute at least one-third of eligible project costs — worth up to \$428 million — for a province that has seen 600,000 more people over the past five years.

"Builders can only build when the infrastructure is there to support new communities," she said.

"A whole lot of work has to happen in the background, and literally under the ground, before the first shovel ever breaks the surface."



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith tour an apartment before making a housing announcement in Red Deer, Alta., Wednesday, July 29, 2026. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Jeff McIntosh

Smith and Carney also touted shared projects, including on energy, hashed out over multiple recent meetings together or with other premiers and leaders.

"The premier said — I think she regrets this — that she has seen more of me than her husband," he joked as Smith laughed.

He said it's the 10th time he has come back to his home province since the 2025 election win.

He said the two levels of government "have shared ambitions and a shared sense of purpose and urgency to get things done."

The visit comes as Alberta is now less than three months away from a referendum on whether it should stay in Canada or hold a second referendum to vote on whether it's time to launch the formal process of breaking away from Confederation.

Smith ordered up the Oct. 19 referendum by noting hundreds of thousands have signed petitions for and against separation, and that it's time to put the issue to rest once and for all. Critics, pointing to opinion polls showing massive support for Alberta staying in Canada, have accused Smith of ordering up the vote just to placate restive separatist hardliners in her United Conservative Party.

The debate has reared an ugly head at times. A recent rodeo parade in Sundre was cancelled after a float festooned with Alberta flags was rejected as incendiary, leading to threats and anger directed toward parade organizers.

A Cold Lake café owner said he closed up his teetering business for good after he alienated some customers by hosting a pro-separation event.

As Carney spoke Wednesday in the hot summer sun, chants and shouts could be heard from a distant group of Alberta-flag waving separatist supporters. There were about 30 of them, kept at bay by police on bicycles.



Protesters gather as Prime Minister Mark Carney and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith make a housing announcement in Red Deer, Alta., Wednesday, July 29, 2026. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Jeff McIntosh

Carney also touted trade deals, including one with China to unlock \$3 billion in export opportunities for canola farmers. Later Wednesday, he saw the canola up close at Antler Valley Farm, south of Red Deer.

He was hosted by Scott McAllister and his father, Wayne. Carney climbed aboard a massive blue-coloured sprayer — a mister of nutrients and insecticides — with tires that matched him in height.

He sat beside the driver as the machine inched out of a Quonset hut.

He also got a crash course on determining the quality of canola. It involves pouring canola into a pan and shaking it so the worst part of the grain sinks to the bottom.

"It takes a special touch," laughed Carney as he vigorously shook the pan.

"Panning for gold."

Later Wednesday, Carney was at a North Vancouver pub to support his former deputy chief of staff, Braeden Caley, as he seeks a seat in Parliament for the riding of North Vancouver-Capilano in next month's byelection.

Carney's itinerary says he is to visit Delta, B.C., on Thursday to tour the Port of Vancouver.

This report by The Canadian Press was first published July 29, 2026.