

Meta to spend \$13-billion to build AI data centre in Alberta

Joe Castaldo | Published July 8, 2026



Alberta Premier Danielle Smith announced a new Meta AI data centre will be built in Sturgeon County. AHMED ZAKOT/The Globe and Mail

plans to spend more than \$13-billion to build a massive artificial intelligence data centre in Sturgeon County, north of Edmonton, marking the technology company's first such facility in Canada.

Meta described the data centre in a news release Wednesday as a 1-gigawatt facility, referring to the amount of electricity it will consume. For comparison, the city of Edmonton draws about 1.4 gigawatts.

The data centre campus will be built on 1,750 acres of land, according to a company spokesperson, well over the size of Stanley Park in Vancouver. The project's energy consumption will dwarf recently announced data centre plans from Bell Canada and Telus Corp.

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To meet the electricity needs of the data centre, Pembina Pipeline Corp., Morgan Stanley Infrastructure Partners and Kinetikor Asset Management are building a \$4.6-billion natural gas plant in Sturgeon County. Dubbed the Greenlight Electricity Centre, the project was first announced last year, with Pembina and its partners saying the plant would serve an unnamed data centre customer.

Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, did not publicly confirm its involvement until Wednesday.



Meta's planned AI data center, its first in Canada, is seen in an artist's rendering. Meta/Reuters

The Alberta government has been courting big tech companies for the past couple of years, touting the province's ample natural gas resources as a way to quickly power energy-hungry data centres. Demand for these facilities, which are large buildings filled with computing equipment for building and running AI models, has been booming amid growing AI development and adoption.

But data centres are proving controversial in many municipalities, as residents question the economic benefits, environmental impacts and the lack of transparency around some of these developments.

The Greenlight power facility in Sturgeon County will provide 932 megawatts of electricity at first and has the potential to expand to more than 1.8 gigawatts (or 1,800 megawatts) in the future.

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Capital Power in Edmonton also said Wednesday that it has signed an energy supply agreement with Meta spanning more than 10 years for 250 megawatts of electricity.

Meta said the facility will employ more than 3,000 workers at the peak of construction and provide more than 300 jobs once operational in two to three years. The company is promising to cover the full electricity costs of the data centre, including for new and upgraded infrastructure. It will use an efficient cooling system to reduce water use, the company said, adding that water consumption will be limited to fire safety and equipment maintenance.

The facility's water use will be "less than a typical Alberta golf course," said Gary Demasi, vice-president of data centre strategy at Meta, at a news conference in Calgary on Wednesday. (The power plants that provide electricity to data centres also consume water, however.)

Mr. Demasi credited provincial Technology Minister Nate Glubish for "putting Alberta on our radar."

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith said at the news conference that the development will bring economic benefits through royalties and taxes. "Alberta is the ideal North American spot for data centres," she said, pointing to the province's power-generation capabilities and cool climate. She added that Meta's data centre will be located in an industrial zone that is not used for farming or residential housing.

Meta, which got its start in social media, is now among the largest developers of AI, and spending big on the infrastructure to power it. The company said earlier this year that its capital expenditures in 2026 will total between US\$125-billion and US\$145-billion, while chief executive officer Mark Zuckerberg has spent lavishly to recruit AI researchers to its Meta Superintelligence Labs division.

Much of the data centre construction is occurring in the United States. Around 70 data centre proposals have been announced in Canada since 2024, but only a handful have started construction, according to data from Aterio, a Vancouver-based company that tracks the industry.

Bell is building a 300-megawatt data centre campus in Saskatchewan, while Telus is constructing two in Vancouver, including a 100-megawatt facility.

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A woman walks by the Meta Lab in Los Angeles, May 20. The Alberta data centre will employ more than 3,000 workers at the peak of construction and provide more than 300 jobs once operational in two to three years, Meta says. Daniel Cole/Reuters

In Alberta, the provincial government wants developers to build their own power generation capacity, rather than rely exclusively on electricity from the grid, which could compromise reliability and raise prices for consumers.

Pembina has said that the Greenlight power facility will be operational in the second half of 2030, while Meta aims to have its data centre online sooner. To bridge the gap, the Alberta Electric System Operator, which manages the grid, last year allocated more than 900 megawatts of electricity to the Greenlight proponents, allowing the data centre to get online beforehand.

AESO is proposing to allot a further 1.6 gigawatts of electricity to developers building their own power generation facilities so that data centres can become operational faster.

Some data centre proposals have run into trouble. The Alberta Utilities Commission rejected an application for a massive development in the town of Olds earlier this year filed by Synapse Real Estate Corp. for containing “significant deficiencies.” The company reapplied, but the commission is still seeking more information from Synapse. Some residents have been vocal in opposing the project, too.

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Data centre proposals have been met with community resistance in other parts of the country, as well. In June, the city council in Hamilton voted in support of a motion to temporarily pause data centre development after a proposal for a facility on the city's waterfront drew intense backlash.

The same month, Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew shot down a large-scale data centre planned for an area southeast of Winnipeg. "There's a big threat to the environment and not much benefit to the economy," he said at the time.

Avik Dey, Capital Power's CEO, contrasted Meta's data centre with those that have hit opposition. "I do think this one's different," he said in an interview. "It comes down to how a project proponent is taking on the responsibility as a partner and as a player in a local community."

Meta said it will spend \$60-million on local infrastructure upgrades, including road and water systems, and that the data centre's electricity consumption will be matched through contracting renewable energy elsewhere.

Keith Stewart, senior energy strategist with Greenpeace Canada, is skeptical of such efforts. "You can say you are offsetting with green power elsewhere, but those are almost always accounting games," he said.

David Pickup, director of the electricity program at the Pembina Institute in Alberta, said in a statement Wednesday that Meta's data centre amounts to a missed opportunity.

"Already, other jurisdictions and operators have chosen a different path: to power these operations with renewables first and foremost," he said. Developers in Minnesota and Texas, for example, are considering hybrid options that include wind and solar power. "Alberta and Meta have alternatively agreed to lock in gas today and build renewables later," he said.