

EMPLOYER Labour Market News

CALGARY AND AREA



Finding workers:

Looking to underemployed groups to fill your labour needs

AS LOW BIRTHRATES and an aging workforce result in a shrinking pool of workers, employers will need to look for new ways to find the staff they need.

“Companies who are needing to fill their labour shortages need to look in places they haven’t looked before, and underemployed groups are a great option,” says Julie Ball, executive director of Talent Pool.

Underemployed groups include newcomers to Canada, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, youth, mature workers and in some circumstances, women.

While many companies are aware of these underemployed groups, they may not be taking the steps necessary to bring them into their organization. According to the [Calgary & Area Labour Market Report —Third Quarter 2008](#), 97 per cent of companies surveyed were aware that some groups of workers in

Calgary are traditionally underemployed, but 92 per cent of those companies were either unsure or had no plans to directly target underemployed people in their recruiting efforts. That may be because companies are unsure of where to start, says Ball.

“Many companies just don’t know where to look to find these underemployed groups, and where they look depends entirely on which group they want to target, because each group is very different, and each requires a different approach. So they should start out by choosing which group they want to attract and do their research.”

The following pages will outline each underemployed group, the recruitment and retention barriers employers face and a best practice story of a Calgary employer who has been successful in overcoming those barriers.



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Newcomers to Canada

IMMIGRANTS REPRESENT A significant pool of educated, working-age individuals. New immigrants presently make up about 22 per cent of the Calgary labour force and are generally younger than mainstream Calgaryans. According to Statistics Canada, the unemployment rate for immigrants was 5.8 per cent in 2006, quite a bit higher than the average provincial unemployment rate of 2.6 per cent.

Barriers to getting a job

- Lack of recognition of foreign education, work experience and professional credentials by professional associations and employers, particularly in geology and engineering.
- No professional Canadian work experience.

- Limited understanding of Canadian work culture.
- Inability to recruit and match skilled immigrants into high demand positions.

Barriers to staying employed

- Workplace culture that relies on self-promotion and networking, since a self-managed career can be a new concept for recent immigrants.
- Interpretation of the behaviour of Canadian employers and co-workers and lack of knowledge of how they should behave at work.
- Lack of buddy/mentor system for newly hired immigrants.
- Few role models in management positions.

Userful: Offering opportunities for skilled immigrants

Userful, a small desktop computer management corporation in Calgary, has hired many immigrants through Bow Valley College's Corporate Readiness Training Program, which helps highly-skilled newcomers to Canada re-enter their fields of expertise.

"Many immigrants have years of experience in their own country but lack Canadian work experience. Through this program they are able to utilize those skills within our company, and that's a very attractive option for them," says Tim Griffin, president of Userful.

Because Userful is an international company that sells their products across the world they tend to attract people of diverse backgrounds. But Userful works to ensure all their employees feel comfortable from their first day on the job.

"On anyone's first day we take them out with a group of staff members. That way they get to meet and develop personal relationships with the people in the company," Griffin says.

The company has a zero tolerance for workplace prejudices and has implemented human resource practices specifically for immigrants.

"We try and document all of our processes and procedures so immigrants can take their time going



Tim Griffin, president of Userful, has hired many skilled newcomers to Canada through Bow Valley College's Corporate Readiness Training Program.

though the material and absorb it before asking any questions," says Griffin.

And when it comes to language barriers, Griffin says patience is key. "Sometimes you need to speak slower or repeat yourself many times in order for them to comprehend what you're saying."

He adds in many cases newcomers also lack knowledge of how Canadian workplaces function.

"In some cultures workplaces operate very differently from Canadian ones. For example some immigrants aren't comfortable in speaking out to their bosses, so those are the kinds of things we guide them with so they can fit in."

Aboriginal peoples

ALBERTA'S POPULATION OF Aboriginal peoples is young, well educated and growing. Along with newcomers, they represent Canada's labour future as many baby boomers retire. According to the [2006 Census](#) there are almost 27,000 Aboriginal peoples in Calgary and area. The average unemployment rate for Aboriginal people living off-reserve in Alberta was 9.4 per cent in December, compared to 4.1 per cent for the general labour force in the same month.

Barriers to getting a job

- Many Aboriginal peoples are unaware of the companies that are looking to hire them. With 50,000 Aboriginal students in post-secondary classes throughout Canada and 4,000 of them graduating this year, companies need to let these graduates know they want to hire them.
- Preparation of workplaces for Aboriginal peoples is important. Educating all levels of a company on the history and culture of Aboriginals is important to ensure better attraction and retention of this group. There are various Aboriginal Awareness programs offered to help prepare workplaces for Aboriginals. Visit the websites for [City of Calgary](#), [Alberta Employment & Immigration](#) and [Ripple Effects Ltd.](#) for more information.

Barriers to staying employed

- Aboriginal peoples can often feel out of place in the workplace. Many times co-workers are unsure of what to say to them and are fearful of offending them, so they won't say anything at all, leaving Aboriginals feeling isolated. It's important to educate all members of an organization about Aboriginal peoples before bringing them into the workplace.



The growing population of Aboriginal peoples makes them a great choice for companies looking to meet their labour needs.

Encana: Targeting Aboriginal workers

Encana realizes the importance of hiring Aboriginal peoples in its company.

"We are proud of our Aboriginal employees and contractors in the field," says Andy Popko, VP of Aboriginal Relations for Encana. "With some 1.4 million Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and 50 per cent of those under the age of 30, they make up a huge part of the talented workforce that haven't been tapped into."

Encana's Aboriginal Affairs department was founded 11 years ago with Popko at the helm. "I was working in public relations then and we were having issues with Aboriginal groups at the time so they asked me to go and deal with those issues," Popko says. "About a year after that we decided to open up a department dedicated to Aboriginal issues."

The company knew in order to attract and retain Aboriginal peoples to its workforce it would have to learn about their history and culture. The company started by hiring Ripple Effects, an Aboriginal awareness training company that offers leadership and training about Aboriginal peoples.

"All levels of the company, from senior management to front line workers took part in the seminars," says Popko. "We all learned about their culture and history which was the first time for most of us, since the Canadian school system has not always included much information about Aboriginal culture."

The company then followed up by inviting Aboriginal leaders to come to the company and tell employees and management about their history and culture and explain why they feel the way they do about issues such as land and culture.

Today, the company employs hundreds of Aboriginal peoples both within the organization and on a contract basis. They work in all levels of the company, from front line staff to management, and Popko says the relationships and partnerships Encana has with Aboriginal peoples and employees help make the company more successful.

"Our company walks the talk when it comes to forming relationships with Aboriginal peoples. We believe in building relationships with them and working with them to build the business and interests of both groups."

Persons with disabilities

ACCORDING TO STATISTICS Canada's [Survey on Labour and Income Dynamics](#), there were about 413,000 working age Albertans with disabilities in 2004.

The national unemployment rate of persons with disabilities aged 15 to 64 was 10.7 per cent during that year, much higher than the non-disabled population's unemployment rate (7.1 per cent).

Barriers to getting a job

- Some workplaces are not physically accessible to people who use wheelchairs, have limited vision or other disabilities.
- Management must have a positive attitude towards hiring persons with disabilities. They need to understand that just because a person may have a disability doesn't mean they can't perform to the same level as a person without a disability.
- Some people are uncomfortable around others who have disabilities and are unsure how to act and what to say, so they avoid the interaction. Others can't imagine how a person with a disability could physically do certain jobs or get the education needed to qualify.
- Some people see the ability rather than the disability. Along with management, co-workers must also change their views of persons with disabilities.
- Many employers think it costs a lot of money to make their workplace accessible to persons with



Mike Morphet, a bus person at Starbucks in Kensington, is one of 30 persons with disabilities currently working for the company in Calgary.

disabilities. In fact, there are several programs, such as [Disability Related Employment Supports](#), which help employers financially and in other ways so they can more easily accommodate persons with disabilities in their workplace.

Barriers to staying employed

- Creating a flexible work situation. In some cases persons with disabilities may need shorter hours or more breaks during a shift in order to perform at the same level as persons without disabilities.

Youth

YOUTHS HAVE AND always will be a key target group for recruitment. Made up of two groups (Gen-Y, and Millennials), these two groups view the workplace in very different ways, and therefore must be approached differently by employers looking to attract them. According to [Vital Signs Canada](#), the youth unemployment rate in Calgary was 6.6 per cent in 2006, significantly higher than the general unemployment rate that year (four per cent).

Barriers to getting a job

- Today's youth have many jobs to choose from, so employers need to appeal to their interests.
- Pay is not as important to youth as lifestyle.
- This group is focused on career development and look for career paths, not temporary jobs.

Barriers to staying employed

- They want to combine jobs with learning, possibly in different sectors at the same time.
- This group has grown up in an age of learning and therefore values ongoing, continuous learning.
- Youth dislike routine, and if they are put into a routine job, short attention spans can make them become disengaged.
- Work-life balance is important to today's youths. They don't see their career as the dominant part of their life, but instead as a means to provide the stability to grow in other areas.
- This group is not afraid to change their career path if it is no longer fulfilling for them.

Mature Workers

ACCORDING TO STATISTICS Canada, more than 22 per cent of Canadian workers are now within 10 years of retirement age.

Between 2005 and 2010, the City of Calgary's [Socio-Economic Outlook](#) predicts no growth in the population aged 10 to 44, and a 21 per cent jump in the population aged 45 to 64.

In response to the aging workforce some governments have banned mandatory retirements. Other companies have developed programs to keep their mature workers in the workforce longer.

The City of Calgary: Making the most of mature workers

The City of Calgary was forced to look to its mature workers to meet its labour needs when it realized a large portion of its workforce were approaching retirement a couple of years ago. "We had significant numbers of individuals who were reaching retirement eligibility and in order to prepare ourselves for a severe shortage we needed to put something in place," says Cindy Munn, lead for corporate recruitment and staffing for the City of Calgary.

To solve this problem the City implemented two initiatives to better make use of its mature workforce in the future: a rehirement program and the Retired Employees Exempt Program (REEP).

Rehirement

The rehirement program offers employees who have crucial skills a position after retirement. "Our rehirement program assists us with knowledge transfer and gives the opportunity for the individual to mentor or do some succession planning for people coming into the company. Or they were working on a significant project and through this policy we have them remain until completion of the project," Munn says.

Retired Employees Exempt Program

REEP provides an opportunity for retired non-unionized employees to return to work for short-term projects. "About 10 per cent of the jobs in the City of Calgary are exempt, meaning they are non-union positions and therefore we have more flexibility filling positions," says Munn. "When employees are about to retire, they get a package that includes a letter offering them the opportunity to put their name forward so they

Recruitment/retention barriers

- More flexible work hours or reduced work schedules are important to mature workers.
- Ongoing benefits are a great attraction and retention tool for this group.
- Mature workers appreciate training programs or opportunities to upgrade their skills.
- They value opportunities to mentor and provide leadership and professional development.



The City of Calgary implemented programs to better retain its high population of mature workers.

can be available for short-term work." So far almost 40 retirees have taken part in the two programs since they were implemented. "Overall they have been very successful programs in filling the need they were intended for," says Munn.

A great resource: Labour Force Profiles

The Alberta government has worked with educators, employers and other key stakeholders to gather information on underemployed groups in the province.

Labour force profiles for Aboriginals, immigrants, older workers, women and youth provide detailed information on each group's involvement in the labour force, with information on the working age population, education levels and employment by industry, occupation and gender.

View each profile at www.employment.alberta.ca. To find Labour Force Profiles click the Business & Industry Tab and then the Labour Market Information tab on the left hand side.

Women

WOMEN IN SOME groups, such as single mothers or women looking for work in traditionally male-dominated occupations, are underemployed. According to the Alberta Employment & Immigration report [Women in the Labour Force](#), the unemployment rate for women in 2007 was 3.7 per cent, higher than the provincial rate of 3.5 per cent.

Barriers to getting a job

- Gender bias and discrimination.
- Not enough role models to encourage women to consider careers in science and technology.
- Fewer women in leadership roles to act as mentors or role models.

- Limited access to training and apprenticeships.

Barriers to staying employed

- Lack of supportive workplace policies and practices.
- Lack of management/supervisor leadership in setting an appropriate tone in terms of acceptance of women in male-dominated workplaces.
- Potential conflict between working and having a family.
- Lack of access to adequate and affordable child care.
- Lack of sensitivity to/empathy for women's life-role demands.

YWCA offers women opportunities

The YWCA of Calgary employs about 380 staff members and a large percentage of them are women, says Arlene Adamson, director of the YWCA. "The YWCA, much like other charity organizations, really attracts women because of the kind of work we do, and the YWCA understands the unique needs of women which is something all companies should do." Adamson says some of the major needs of women include childcare, leadership and growth and equality in the workplace.

Childcare

The YWCA offers the second largest childcare program in Canada. Calgary's YWCA offers childcare onsite which is available for employees to use. "Childcare is a very important issue for women, particularly single mothers. The accessibility and affordability of childcare just isn't available for women. That becomes a huge barrier for them to be effective in the workplace because they can't concentrate at work or be there as often as they want or need to."

The organization also offers flexible schedules for all its employees. "We realize that when people come to work, men or women, they bring their entire selves to work, so we recognize when employees need to take time off or need to be home with their children."

Leadership and growth

"Unfortunately in the private sector there still tends to be somewhat of an invisible glass ceiling that makes it



[The YWCA recognizes the unique needs of women in its workforce.](#)

hard for women to enter management roles and that's because the support systems just aren't there for women to be able to enter those roles. Things like flexible schedules and childcare are key to helping women enter and move up in the workforce," says Adamson. "We have many women in management or senior management roles and we lead by example. In fact, our CEO is a woman.

There is plenty of room for growth within the organization and that's important to women."

Equality

"We strongly believe that men and women should be paid the same wage for the same job, which unfortunately isn't always the case in the private sector," says Adamson.

"At the YWCA the job defines the salary, not the person. So we make sure the same wage is paid whether a man or a woman is doing the job."

Ground freight transportation

AS A VITAL part of Canada's economy, the transportation industry serves all aspects of the economy, from petrochemicals to retail trade.

According to [Transport Canada](#), the transportation industry accounted for 2.8 per cent of Canada's GDP in 2007.

While its close link to other sectors can be beneficial when the economy is booming, it can also be the first industry to suffer in uncertain economic conditions such as what the country is currently enduring.

The three sectors of ground transportation include trucking, rail

and courier. As the credit crunch continues, construction dwindles, drilling and oil companies shut down or postpone projects and consumer spending decreases, companies, associations and stakeholders in these three sectors are all feeling the effects.

Trucking industry

At a glance:

- ✓ An estimated \$67 billion a year industry
- ✓ Employs close to 400,000 people in Canada
- ✓ An estimated 615,000 heavy trucks in 2006



As the dominant form of freight transportation in Alberta, trucks haul for companies from all industries, such as the oil sands, agriculture and retail.

This has always been a highly competitive industry and trucking companies in Alberta are just beginning to feel the effects of the slowing economy.

"In Alberta (trucking companies) have been somewhat insulated from the effects of the economic downturn, but we are being indirectly affected in terms of slowdowns in many companies," says Mayne Root, executive director of the Alberta Motor Transport Association.

"Right now trucking companies are still operating fully but that could change. In the next few weeks or months at least, we will feel the full effect of the economy on our business."

Fuel

Rapid fluctuations in the price of fuel also has immediate effects on the industry. As prices rise and fall the industry must constantly adjust its prices in order to stay competitive.

Increased competition

As Eastern Canada's manufacturing industry suffers, trucking companies that are running out of work are

coming to Alberta in droves, increasing competition in the province. At the same time business is slowing down and companies have ended contracts. "Industries like petroleum and construction have announced cutbacks recently and many trucking companies in Alberta are directly related to those industries and are slowing down because of that," says Root.

Looking ahead

In an effort to deal with increased competition and less work in the province, Root says companies are looking for ways to decrease costs, and with already low operating costs they will need to look to other areas in order to stay in business.

"Making cuts in areas such as staffing and overhead will most likely be common."

Ron Singer Truck Lines Ltd, a construction truck driving company in Calgary, has already felt the effects of the slowing economy.

The decline in construction has meant the end of many contracts for the company. "Fewer homes are being built, and while there's plenty of work downtown the competition is fierce with trucking companies charging base rates to get work," says operations manager Jennifer Singer.

Singer says her company has already cut costs. "For example, we have our own shop and do our own maintenance which saves us a lot of money. And during slow times we cut back our staff to the bare minimum. We keep only the people who know what they are doing and can multi-task."

She adds while the recession will hit the industry hard, reputable companies should be able to weather the economic storm. "The safe contractors and reliable companies will make it through."

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Courier industry

At a glance:

- ✓ An estimated \$5.5 billion a year industry
- ✓ Employs more than 46,800 people in Canada
- ✓ Estimated 2,400 courier companies utilizing 26,000 delivery vehicles

A big part of the Canadian courier business is shipments traveling outside and/or coming into Canada. For example, on an export basis, over 80 per cent of the industry's U.S./International revenue is accounted for by express shipments.

This means overall economic performance is the primary determinant of growth in this industry.

"We're definitely feeling the affect of the economy on our industry," says David Turnball, president and CEO of the Canadian Courier & Logistics Association, which represents 75 per cent of the express delivery industry in Canada. "In some ways our industry is the canary in the coal mine, where we feel the immediate effects of reduced volumes."

"In some ways our industry is the canary in the coal mine, where we feel the immediate effects of reduced volumes."

While December is the industry's busiest month due to gift giving, Turnball says courier companies are unsure what 2009 will bring, but are preparing for the worst.

"Companies are looking at their expenses and seeing if there are areas where they can reduce spending," he says.

"We are very sensitive to decreases in cross border activity, and the downturn of the U.S. economy is more severe. For example, DHL in the United States has closed down and 9,500 jobs were lost. That hasn't happened here but consolidations are very common in this sector and that's one of the things that could happen in Canada."

Another option may be reducing staff. "If you don't have the capacity to have people on the payroll of course there is the danger of having to lay people off so the sooner we can get this economy turned around the better," says Turnball.

Rail industry

At a glance:

- ✓ Industry revenue totaled \$10.7 billion in 2007
- ✓ Employs about 95,000 people directly and indirectly in Canada
- ✓ Operates 775 trains a day across Canada



Of all the ground freight transportation sectors, the railway industry has some advantages when it comes to facing the current economic situation.

"Steel on steel is the most efficient transportation system and in Canada it's a great system which we are lucky to have, so an already cost-effective business will shine in bad times," says Cliff Mackay, president and CEO of the Railways Association of Canada.

While forecasters in this sector expect some traffic to decrease, they expect other areas will increase somewhat, leveling off the impact of the economic downturn.

"We're expecting merchandising traffic in areas such as automotive, lumber and steel to decrease in 2009, but not a dramatic change," says Mackay. "However we don't expect a decrease in commodities traffic because the demand is still here."

But forecasters are expecting little to no growth for 2009, and the effects of the economy have already been noticed in some areas.

Calgary-based CP Rail recently announced plans to temporarily lay off 600 people across the country, and other Canadian railways are introducing cost reduction programs in an effort to match capacity to the market. "Rail cars are being pulled out at a greater pace than we've seen for a long time," says Mackay.

"Most companies are making short-term plans to manage their capacity issues and are focusing their efforts on cost effectiveness and cost conservation. But so far I haven't heard of any changes to long-term financial plans."

Bryan Tucker, senior manager of public affairs and media relations at CN says the company is doing what it can to deal with the adverse business conditions.

"We have experienced a decrease in shipments but we feel that we are well-positioned to weather the storm because our industry is a low-cost operator," he says.

The Calgary Logistics Council

Working together to get ahead

THE CALGARY LOGISTICS Council may not be well-known, but its accomplishments are far reaching in Calgary's transportation industry.

"Our primary purpose is sector awareness," says Fred Robinson, chairman of the council.

Consisting of 15 members, the council started up in the late 1990s. "We realized that companies in the logistics sector would benefit from joining forces on important issues," says Robinson. Those issues were primarily infrastructure-related, but human resources and educational issues were also a concern.

Joining forces

After incorporating in 2003, the council continued to work at its core issues and is finding new ways to address them today. It has several influential members, such as the Calgary International Airport, the Port of Vancouver, the Van Horne Institute and Mount Royal College. The council has also joined forces with other organizations to promote its cause, such as The Canadian Supply Chain Sector and the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, where the council's members serve on the transportation and logistics committee.

"These associations have helped to strengthen the council's presence in the logistics sector, along with the council's own initiatives," says Robinson.

"Our members meet once a month to discuss how to move the industry forward, and among their discussions is planning for short-term and long-term infrastructure goals."

The council also invites provincial and municipal representatives to present their plans, so council members can keep up-to-date with the current happenings and offer their input.

Awareness and education

On the human resources and educational forefront, the council gets as hands-on as possible.

"We communicate directly with educational institutions and try to be a channel of awareness (between the logistics sector) and young people," Robinson says.



The Calgary Logistics Council brings the transportation industry together as a single voice.

Some of the council's members participate in Mount Royal College's International Business and Supply Chain Management program, which trains students in logistics issues like strategic sourcing, transportation and distribution (<http://business.mtroyal.ca/supplychain>). The council also takes part in an annual career fair, recruiting people to give the logistics sector a try.

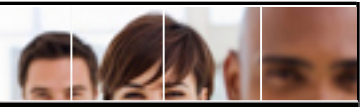
"For years the logistics industry in Canada has had trouble finding and keeping qualified drivers, and with the increasing number of retirements coming in the near future we are looking for ways to fill our employment needs," says Robinson.

Another way the council goes about recruiting new people to the industry is through its website, Careers in Logistics: www.careersinlogistics.ca.

The website provides information on education and training, career profiles and job postings, as well as an in-depth look at what the logistics industry is all about.

Robinson encourages people to consider the possibilities logistics has to offer, and for companies to take a stand and make a difference in the industry's future by becoming a member of the council.

For an annual membership fee of \$150, members are included in meetings and initiatives set out by the council. "The more people who belong and participate, the more we are able to strengthen that single voice," he says.



Need to learn more? Take online courses about employment standards!

Learning more about employment standards can be as easy as a click of the mouse!

The Alberta Government's Employment and Immigration department offers [eLearning programs](#).

These stand-alone, interactive, web-based awareness programs are designed to provide Alberta employees and employers with an opportunity to learn more about minimum employment standards in the workplace.

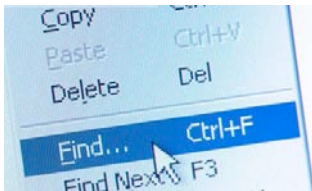
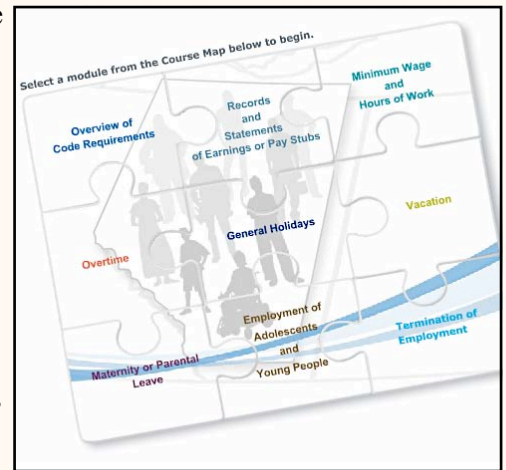
The following online courses are now available:

Dispute Resolution

Provides basic information and options to help address disputes in the workplace relating to payment of earnings, leaves, etc.

Basics of Employment Standards

This eLearning program will help you gain a basic understanding of the main topics of Employment Standards legislation.



Whether it is for workplace support or general knowledge, there are many places employers can turn for information.

Health and Safety

Work Safe Alberta

An organization committed to preventing work-related injuries. employment.alberta.ca/whs-wsa

Canadian Safety Council—Occupational Safety and Health

Provides information on how to encourage safety in the workplace and deal with mishaps. www.safety-council.org/info/OSH/OSH.html

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)

Gives direction to employers regarding what to do if employees suffer from substance abuse problems. www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/substance.html

General Links

Calgary Chamber of Commerce

An organization for business in Calgary to network and learn business practices. www.calgarychamber.com

Where to find us

This publication and other labour market information products can be found at employment.alberta.ca/calgary.

We welcome your feedback! Send comments or suggestions to ei.webmaster@gov.ab.ca.

Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce

Alberta government's 10-year labour force strategy. employment.alberta.ca/betw

Calgary Economic Development

Connects businesses to information and networks in the Calgary region and promotes the city. www.calgaryeconomicdevelopment.com

Economic development in Alberta

Provides support and assistance to Alberta business and also compiles information on the Alberta economy. www.alberta-canada.com

Employee Relations

Alberta Employment and Immigration Mediation Services

Helps resolve disputes in the workplace through collective bargaining agreements. employment.alberta.ca/mediationservices

Human Resources

Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations (CCHRA)

The human resources body combining efforts of 10 provincial and specialist human resources associations. www.cchra-ccarh.ca

Alberta Employment Standards

Information on everything from minimum wage to maternity and parental leave. employment.alberta.ca/employmentstandards

Alberta Labour Relations Board

Employment standards information for trade unions, labour law and more. alrb.gov.ab.ca/index.html