

### **GROWTH Challenges**

Finding skilled workers is increasingly challenging for Edmonton and other prosperous regions across Canada and the world. There are many reasons contributing to current labour shortages: baby-boomers are beginning to retire; birth rates are declining; a strong, global economy has increased employment in many countries that traditionally supplied immigrants to Canada; skilled trades have not been attracting enough young people; and many jobs today require specialized training.

Edmonton's new challenge is to attract many new workers to fill a growing variety of jobs while maintaining the region's competitive edge as an affordable place to live and do business.

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### **EDMONTON'S Workforce Challenge**

- ▶ The key driver of the Edmonton economy is the Athabasca oilsands near Fort McMurray. Investment in the oilsands entered a new phase with the signing of a federal-provincial agreement in 1996. Since then, at least 77,400 jobs attributable to oilsands development have been added the Edmonton economy ... in addition to previously forecast job growth. As investment booms in resource-rich northern Alberta, employment opportunities in many high-demand occupations become more urgent.
- ▶ There's more to come. Between now and 2015, investment in the oilsands is expected to nearly double and finding new workers will be a challenge.

Edmonton's workforce challenge boils down to six main elements:

- ▶ Attract and retain new skilled workers to Edmonton from within Canada;
- ▶ Attract and retain skilled workers from other countries;
- ▶ Train and promote existing workers into higher-value jobs;
- ▶ Make better use of immigrant workers by accepting credentials earned abroad and providing better opportunities to upgrade their credentials once they arrive;
- ▶ Create better employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal workers, and
- ▶ Encourage better co-ordination between employers and educational institutions to train students and apprentices in high-demand occupations.

### **LABOUR Shortage**

The Conference Board of Canada estimates Alberta could have a shortfall of 350,000 workers by 2025.

- ▶ Edmonton's workforce challenge boils down to six main elements:
  - ▶ 56 per cent of Alberta employers already report difficulties hiring workers;
  - ▶ 28 per cent of employers had at least one position unfilled for more than four months;
  - ▶ Edmonton's unemployment rate of 4.5 per cent was the lowest among Canada's major cities in 2005.

## FINDING Solutions

Major efforts are underway to meet regional labour challenge.

Edmonton Economic Development Corp., through its new **Edmonton Workforce Connection (EWC)** program, works with industry, government and institutions to address the shortage of skilled workers. EWC initiatives include:

- ▶ **Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention Forums** — Edmonton will have the largest Aboriginal population of all Canadian metropolitan areas in 2017, with an average age of 23.5 years. This key section of our population could help reduce the effects of a tight labour market.
- ▶ **Apprentices** — Pre-apprenticeship training programs are in place to prepare apprentices for workplace environments and expectations.
- ▶ **Immigrants** — Missions abroad to attract skilled workers and programs to improve the potential of immigrants already here, including raising employer awareness and encouraging foreign students to remain after they graduate.
- ▶ **Migrant Study** — A study is underway to analyze the demographics and motivation of those who people leaving Edmonton for other cities. Strategies will be developed to mitigate unexplained out-migration.
- ▶ **Career Seminars** — offered for students, parents and teachers to promote high-demand occupations.
- ▶ New communications resources will be available on Edmonton workforce issues, including:
  - ▶ new labour attraction websites [www.edmonton.com/ewc](http://www.edmonton.com/ewc) and [www.movetoedmonton.com](http://www.movetoedmonton.com)
  - ▶ monthly e-newsletters to inform businesses and employers about events, initiatives and innovative ideas regarding labour shortages
  - ▶ labour attraction market forecasts accessible online
  - ▶ *Images of Edmonton*, a vibrant newsstand-quality magazine showcasing the best of living and working in Edmonton (fall 2006)

## OTHER Edmonton Workforce Initiatives

The City of Edmonton created the Department of Diversity and Inclusion in 2005, designed to tap into the energies of previously overlooked groups such as Aboriginals, immigrants and people with disabilities. A city task force on immigration aims to make Edmonton more welcoming to new immigrants. And a new Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord Office seeks a better relationship with the fastest growing segment of the city's population.

## FULL Employment

In 2005 Alberta had:

- ▶ Canada's lowest unemployment rate: 3.9 per cent
- ▶ The highest participation rate: 72.8 per cent
- ▶ The highest employment rate: 69.8 per cent

## DEMOGRAPHIC Issues

- ▶ Aging population: By 2026, 20 per cent of Alberta's population will be over 65
- ▶ Declining population: Fertility rates are 1.7, well below the replacement rate of 2.1
- ▶ Higher skills and education: 60 per cent of Alberta jobs will require a post-secondary education

## Contact

### For further information:

- [www.edmonton.com/ewc](http://www.edmonton.com/ewc)
- [www.movetoedmonton.com](http://www.movetoedmonton.com)

### Edmonton Economic Development Corporation

Third Floor, World Trade Centre  
9990 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Canada T5J 1P7

Local Phone: (780) 424-9191  
Toll-Free: 1-800-661-6965  
E-mail: [klink@edmonton.com](mailto:klink@edmonton.com)  
Web: [www.edmonton.com](http://www.edmonton.com)

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