

Unlocking Our Talent Potential



Unlocking our talent potential

Today, businesses across all sectors are threatened by a lack of available talent, skills gaps, and greater competition for skilled workers. In the first quarter of 2022, Alberta's unemployment rate was 5.9 per cent – almost a percentage point lower than our natural rate of unemployment. While low unemployment may appear positive, a lack of equilibrium in our employment rates underlines the labour shortages many businesses are facing. With a record 88,000 vacant jobs in Alberta, we simply don't have enough people available to work – and natural market changes are unlikely to resolve a challenge of this magnitude.

We're on the right track – ATB Financial indicates that in September 2022 nearly 10,000 people relocated to Alberta from elsewhere in Canada – a higher rate of migration than anywhere else in the country. Notably, those arriving are largely in their mid-20s, increasing our vibrancy and helping strengthen Alberta's economy long-term. This impressive level of relocation will require a renewed focus on talent retention as well.

To build on Alberta's momentum, the provincial government has invested \$2.6 million into the Alberta is Calling advertising campaign. Launching in major Canadian cities such as Toronto and Vancouver, the campaign focuses on attracting talent by highlighting Alberta's affordability, lifestyle, and career opportunities.

Addressing Alberta's talent gap requires sustained focus, collaboration, and new perspectives. Identifying innovative ideas for growing our talent pool, addressing skills gaps, and strengthening our talent pipeline requires diverse groups to come together. As a convener and catalyst for business, the Calgary Chamber has worked alongside our members to address this challenge. Convening thought leaders from business, speaking directly with young Calgarians, and informed by consultation with local businesses, we have developed policy recommendations and tangible solutions to some of the most pressing issues concerning talent. These recommendations provide a framework for addressing the talent crisis today and ensuring our resilience in the future.





FOREWORD

Investing in People, Culture & Infrastructure is one of four sections of *Unlocking Our Talent Potential*, a set of recommendations created by business, for business. These recommendations are intended to advance the conversation and spur increased collaboration on talent and labour shortages in Calgary. *Unlocking Our Talent Potential* tables creative ideas and opportunities that all levels of government can capitalize on to strengthen our talent pipeline and eliminate gaps experienced by many businesses – large and small.

This section of *Unlocking Our Talent Potential* examines the impact infrastructure and cultural investments have on talent retention and development in our city. Exploring both our challenges and opportunities, recommendations have been developed that highlight opportunities to invest in local

vibrancy and skills development as a means of alleviating our talent shortfall. To develop the recommendations contained within, the Calgary Chamber convened a policy council with thought leaders from businesses across several sectors, post-secondary institutions, childcare providers, immigration law firms, recruitment firms, professional services, and small business owners. We spoke directly with young Calgarians and consulted local businesses.

We look forward to working closely with government to implement the recommendations identified in *Unlocking Our Talent Potential*, and maintaining a focus on collaboration with community and government organizations on achieving our common goal of ensuring Calgary remains a top destination for talent globally.



OUR VISION

We envision a vibrant Calgary, where we are known for our quality of life, cultural scene, and youthful energy, and are leaders in creating the communities in which people seek to live, work, and play.

OUR CHALLENGE

Calgary's focus on talent attraction is evident through campaigns such as Live Tech, Love Life and our delegation to Toronto's Collision. While these initiatives are bearing fruit, Calgary also faces challenges to retaining and developing the talent that is already within the city. Investment in the Calgary of tomorrow will prevent the city from becoming stagnant, ensuring we can attract and retain talent long-term.

Youth between the ages of 15 and 29 account for 18 per cent of the city's total population, making young Calgarians a key workforce demographic. However, this group has also been the slowest-growing demographic over the last 20 years, emphasizing the need to retain the youth we currently have. To better understand the issues impacting youth retention, we met directly with a group of young Calgarians. They told us they are looking for greater vibrancy and diversity in arts, entertainment, and cultural experiences.

The stalling of the new Event Centre was cited as causing entertainment experiences and concerts to bypass Calgary. For some, it is seen as an indication of the City and business' ability to work together to invest in Calgary's long-term future.

Intra-city visitation will also be key to our success. The city's different quadrants often operate in isolation due to sprawl, and more can be done to incent visitation across quadrants. Several factors contribute to this including access to and cost of public transportation, real and perceived public

safety concerns, the cost of parking in the downtown core, and a lack of awareness about events occurring across the city.

Retaining talent also necessitates that we prioritize talent development. Polling by Leger shows 37 per cent of Albertans value opportunities for professional development and growth in their jobs. To retain employees and prepare them for emerging economic trends, further investments are needed in work-integrated learning, reskilling and upskilling programs, and micro-credentialing. While support for these programs is high, their success in creating an agile and employable workforce is dependent on awareness and recognition. Research shows that only one-quarter of Canadians have heard of micro-credentials and 59 per cent of employers were unclear or not familiar with them at all. Raising awareness of talent development options among prospective employees and employers will be critical to leveraging existing and future programming.



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OUR OPPORTUNITY

Investing in the infrastructure and culture that will help retain and develop Calgary's talent is an important step toward addressing labour shortages. These investments must be strategic in nature, prioritizing what Calgarians want and need from their city now, and in the future.

During our policy council session, and in conversation with young Calgarians, we heard support for investments made to date. Funding to transform the Arts Commons, the Glenbow Museum, construction of the BMO Centre Expansion, and the creation and revitalization of key communities are all examples of infrastructure investments that will bring vibrancy to our city.

Additionally, with skill vacancies accounting for \$25 billion in unrealized economic value nationally, Calgary is pursuing opportunities in the skills-based economy. The Calgary Chamber, Calgary Economic Development, and all seven of Calgary's post-secondary institutions are collaborating to address work-integrated learning. Several organizations are leveraging the Opportunity Calgary Investment Fund to support work-integrated

learning initiatives, providing reskilling and upskilling programs like EDGE UP, and working with community partners such as CityXLab to drive research on ensuring Calgary maintains an adaptable workforce.

Supporting this work are Calgary's educational institutions – the University of Calgary is a principal provider of continued learning programs locally, offering over 1,200 courses and seminars and over 45 in-demand certificate programs. These types of initiatives are starting to strengthen our talent pipeline by making Calgary an ideal place to live, work, and play. However, governments and businesses must continue collaborating on investments that excite people about the future of our city.



Recommendation 1

Invest in infrastructure that positions Calgary as the destination of choice for talent

While significant work is underway to enhance and modernize Calgary's infrastructure, further investments are required. Public transit, affordable housing, and cultural and sporting centres are just a few examples of infrastructure investments that will contribute to our city's appeal to talent.

MUNICIPAL

Ensure affordable housing options are available to all income levels by providing more flexibility in municipal zoning, allowing more people to call Calgary home.

MUNICIPAL

Review and update the City's Cycling Strategy, prioritizing new bikeway projects and improvements based on consultation with Calgarians and informed by best practices from other municipalities.

MUNICIPAL / PROVINCIAL

Work collaboratively to fund community development and regentrification projects, such as the West End.

MUNICIPAL

With a focus on cost-effectiveness, move forward with the construction of the Green Line, transit to the airport, and shared transportation to the Rocky Mountains.

MUNICIPAL / PROVINCIAL

Work with post-secondary institutions locally and nationally to move, open, or expand campuses and residences within Calgary's downtown core.

MUNICIPAL / PROVINCIAL / FEDERAL

Collaborate amongst all orders of government to unlock funding and supports to advance Calgary's Event Centre and the Culture + Entertainment District.

Recommendation 2

Invest in community vibrancy including sports and entertainment

Calgary's vibrancy must be a competitive advantage. Investments in attracting and promoting arts, entertainment, and cultural events are critical to ensuring Calgary has a diversity of experiences.

MUNICIPAL

Leveraging Calgary's business improvement areas (BIAs) and various community organizations, create a city-wide events calendar to promote arts, entertainment, and cultural experiences across the city.

MUNICIPAL

Leveraging funding available through the Government of Alberta's Community Initiatives Program, identify and attract major sporting events to Calgary.

MUNICIPAL

Provide free transit access in the city during major events, such as Stampede, music festivals, and major sporting events to encourage inner-city visitation and increase accessibility for people living across the city.

MUNICIPAL / PROVINCIAL

Invest in sporting infrastructure to advance Calgary's position as a hub for recreational and elite sport, including a downtown recreational facility, and investments in WinSport and the Olympic Oval.



Recommendation 3

Position Calgary as a talent leader through investments in skills development

Workforce development is critical to talent retention. Investments that support Alberta's education system and promote alternative means of acquiring employable skills ensure Albertans can meet the rapidly changing needs of our economy.

MUNICIPAL

Support ongoing work to enhance Calgary's labour force adaptability by providing grants and bursaries to research organizations, such as [CityXLab](#).

PROVINCIAL

Evaluate the creation of a "Continuous Learning" tax incentive for businesses that provide their employees with opportunities for professional development and upskilling.

PROVINCIAL

Leveraging lessons learned from the existing [Micro-Credential Pilot Program](#), commit to multi-year funding to support Alberta educational institutions in delivering micro-credential courses.

MUNICIPAL

Leverage municipal invest funds, such as the [Opportunity Calgary Investment Fund](#), to support businesses seeking to provide Calgarians with work-integrated learning opportunities.

PROVINCIAL

Utilize labour market studies to identify current skill and competency gaps in Alberta's workforce, aligning new funding to educational programs anticipated to fill workforce skills gaps.

Recommendation 4

Leverage businesses as talent developers

Businesses are uniquely positioned to develop talent to meet their needs. Recognizing this, governments must collaborate with the business community to support them in developing their workforce.

MUNICIPAL

Develop a City-run municipal student work experience program, similar to the [Alberta Municipal Internship Program](#), or the [Federal Student Work Experience Program](#), to promote student workforce participation and training within Calgary.

PROVINCIAL

Extend support for businesses hiring and training talent by re-opening the training component of the [Alberta Jobs Now program](#).

PROVINCIAL

Create a tuition credit for students participating in the work-integrated learning programs offered by their post-secondary institution.

MUNICIPAL

Support the [Regional Work-Integrated Learning Pilot](#) as a collaborative approach that leverages post-secondary institutions to support industry adoption of work-integrated learning.

PROVINCIAL

Create a "Business-to-Government Secondment" program that facilitates talent exchanges between businesses and government, across sectors, to promote skills training and sharing of best practices across sectors.





Better Together.

The Calgary Chamber exists to help businesses thrive. As the conveyor and catalyst for a vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous business community, the Chamber works to build strength and resilience among its members and position Calgary as a magnet for talent, diversification, and opportunity. As an independent, non-profit, non-partisan organization founded and funded by our members, we build on our 131-year history to serve and advocate for businesses of all sizes, in all sectors, across the city.



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