

Unlocking Our Talent Potential



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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

Strengthening Calgary's Reputation and Brand 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 our provincial and local narratives have on talent attraction. Exploring both our challenges and opportunities, recommendations focus on strengthening Calgary's reputation and brand to alleviate 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.



In a study examining youth mobility in Alberta, participants estimated that around 40% of Albertans worked directly in oil and gas—six times higher than reality.

OUR VISION

We envision Calgary's story shared around the world, attracting talent and businesses that aspire to invest in a city where the future is bright and the possibilities for growth and prosperity are the best in the world because of the economic opportunities and quality of life.

OUR CHALLENGE

With many Canadians facing the consequences of inflation, Alberta and Calgary are turning heads as places where people can enjoy an affordable and high-quality of life. While our marketing campaigns are excelling at promoting these advantages, some branding challenges hamper our progress. To understand the impact these challenges have on talent, both regional and local narratives must be examined.

Regionally, Alberta is struggling with stereotypes that exacerbate a misperception that the province is counter to many Canadians' common goals. Public opinion research indicates that upwards of 50 per cent of Canadians wouldn't feel comfortable living in the province. To some, including many already living here, the perception is that if you're not corporate and cowboy, you don't belong. Compounding this, our political narrative has often been associated with anger and frustration, resulting in those outside of Alberta holding unfavourable views of Albertans and our political environment.

Locally, Calgary is struggling with a perceived lack of economic and social diversification.

As a province synonymous with oil and gas, many people believe their economic futures in the city are reliant on the energy sector.

During our policy council, businesses expressed that while Calgary's brand acknowledges the traditional importance of our natural resources, it risks perpetuating a myth there is a lack of diverse economic opportunities in the city. The perception that the city is focused on a single industry may explain why many Calgarians have chosen to pursue economic opportunities elsewhere.

Another worrisome trend has been the perception that Calgary has not been diverse or inclusive. In a survey of Calgarians' outlooks and attitudes, 82 per cent of those aged 18 to 24, and 68 per cent of those aged 25 and older, believe Calgary needs to address racism and discrimination. To attract the talent businesses require, Calgary must be welcoming and inclusive – and this must be reflected in our brand.

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OUR OPPORTUNITY

How Alberta and Calgary are perceived is critical to attracting and retaining talent. Effectively addressing our labour crisis requires businesses, governments, and citizens work together to develop and amplify narratives that not only attract people to visit but motivate them to stay. These narratives must dispel misperceptions, accurately depicting the Alberta and Calgary of today: we are inclusive, diverse, opportunity-ready, and future-focused.

Locally, these narratives already exist. But they need to be amplified. Calgary is progressive both socially and economically. Our city is a regional leader on climate change, setting ambitious climate goals and developing strategies to meet them. Our energy sector is the largest investor in clean technology nationally, creating many diverse career opportunities throughout the province. We are Canada's third-most diverse major city, with 54 per cent of newcomers to Calgary arriving from outside of Canada. A focus on economic diversification is driving a burgeoning tech

scene, bringing in \$433 million in venture capital investment and positioning us as a top 20 fintech hub globally.

Amplifying these stories beyond regional echo chambers will attract the talent we require to succeed. However, this is only possible when businesses, governments, and other stakeholders are unified in the story we tell about Alberta and Calgary's future.

We are Canada's third-most diverse major city, with 54% of newcomers to Calgary arriving from outside of Canada.



Recommendation 1

Develop a unified vision and narrative for Calgary, working with businesses and other partners to promote Calgary's story nationally and internationally

Calgary's long-term success hinges on our ability to align our reality with others' perceptions. We must develop a cohesive story that shares our diversity, optimism, forward-looking mentality, and focus on sustainability nationally and internationally.

MUNICIPAL

Convene City officials, the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, Calgary Economic Development, Tourism Calgary, Invest Alberta, and other contributors to Calgary's story to review opportunities to align on messaging and strengthen collaborative efforts to articulate and amplify Calgary's story.

PROVINCIAL

Create an inter-governmental marketing committee – comprised of Invest Alberta, Travel Alberta, the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, regional tourism agencies, regional economic development agencies, and other levels of government – to review opportunities to align on messaging and strengthen collaborative efforts to articulate and amplify Alberta's story.

MUNICIPAL

Create a Chief Brand Officer (CBO) position within City Administration, responsible for coordinating and managing Calgary's brand across all sectors and communities.

FEDERAL

Within Innovation, Science, and Economic Development (ISED) Canada's Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF), remove advertising as an ineligible expense for Canadian firms looking to grow or expand their business internationally.

Recommendation 2

Create an authentic Calgary brand by engaging local businesses and Calgarians in telling the story of our city

Attracting talent to Calgary requires authentic messaging that incorporates the stories and experiences of local businesses and Calgarians. Highlighting those who have chosen our city as home shares in promotion efforts, providing prospective talent first-hand insights into what it means to be Calgarian.

MUNICIPAL

Encourage local businesses to support City marketing efforts by offering in-kind incentives.

PROVINCIAL

Within the Jobs, Economy, and Innovation portfolio, create a community marketing grant program that supports Alberta businesses in developing community-driven marketing campaigns that promote the benefits of living and working in their regions.

PROVINCIAL

Leveraging lessons learned from the ONLYLYON Ambassadors program, and in collaboration with Invest Alberta's Global Teams, establish an Alberta Ambassadors network that leverages Albertans at home and abroad in promoting the province as a place to live, work, and play.





Recommendation 3

Market the Alberta and Calgary of today, focusing on what makes us a desirable place to live, work, and play

Countering misperceptions about our province and city necessitates we focus on what makes Calgary a desirable place to live, work, and play. To do this, we must market the Alberta and Calgary of today, highlighting our diversity, affordability, optimism, and open-mindedness.

MUNICIPAL

Create a marketing campaign focused on highlighting Calgary's cultural advantages across the city, including investments in arts and entertainment spaces and the revitalization of community spaces.

PROVINCIAL

Extend the 'Alberta is Calling' campaign in major cities across Canada.

FEDERAL

Create an additional Prairies Canada funding program focused on providing businesses with the capital needed to attract regional and national talent of all skill levels, including marketing and advertising costs associated with hiring.

PROVINCIAL

Convene officials from Jobs and Economy, Innovation and Technology, Labour and Immigration, Travel Alberta, and regional technology companies to design and execute a marketing campaign that brings awareness to Alberta's diversification, including our growing tech scene.

PROVINCIAL

Leverage lessons learned from the Government of B.C.'s Small Business Spotlights program, identify opportunities for the Government of Alberta and municipalities to collaborate on initiatives that amplify employment opportunities with small and medium-sized businesses across the province.





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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