

JANUARY - JUNE 2025

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM REPORT




Whitecourt

CORE FUNCTIONS



- Developing and implementing business retention strategies and initiatives.
- Establishing and maintaining on-going relationships with local businesses, investors, developers, and community organizations and stakeholders.
- Implementing investment attraction and marketing strategies.
- Actively participating in coordination of collaborative events, activities and initiatives with community organizations.
- Supporting tourism development as an economic driver through collaborative partnerships and Whitecourt Tourism branding.
- Creating and implementing an Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan to guide projects and initiatives to support identified priorities.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM STRATEGIC WORK PROGRAM

JUNE 2025

NOW TOPIC/ Question & Outcomes	OPTIONS & Action
<p>1. FOSTER BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION</p> <p><i>How do we assist with keeping business in the community in the community and help them grow? How do we establish consistent outreach to businesses to understand their needs and challenges?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular communication with businesses through surveys, meetings, etc. Support services/partnerships/resources Networking opportunities Actively engage/listen and address concerns Support workforce development Market research Real estate development Develop programs or partnerships that support startups and growing businesses through mentorship, resources, and networking Promotion of local products/services Collaboration with Economic Development Agencies Implement downtown vitalization projects 	<p>OPTIONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> IN-HOUSE CONSULTANT COMBINATION <p>ACTION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Establish outreach plan to understand business needs and challenges – Jan 2025 Market Whitecourt Launch Program – Feb 2025 Meet with CFYE to identify options that support entrepreneur/business retention efforts – Mar 2025 Identify partnerships and implement a resource based forum for businesses - Apr 2025 Schedule regular meetings with local commercial realtors – Jun 2025 Year 3 Designation of Rural Renewal Program – Jul 2025 Organize marketing campaigns to promote local goods and services – Jul 2025 Host Summer Street Fest in Downtown – Aug 2025 Partner with businesses on collaborative initiatives that support business retention – Sept 2025 Host Small Business Week training and appreciation event – Oct 2025 Organize Career & Education Expo partnership – Nov 2025 Identify and promote available commercial real estate opportunities that can accommodate expanding businesses – Dec 2025+ Create action items based on BR&E Project – Dec 2025+
<p>2. INCREASE INVESTMENT READINESS AND BUSINESS ATTRACTION</p> <p><i>How do we ensure we have the competitive positioning, and necessary information to engage with potential investors? How do we target specific industries that align with the community's strengths and available resources to effectively creating niche markets? How do we encourage investment?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and identify capacity Marketing and promotion of assets Relationship building/networking Business attraction strategies Business-friendly/pro business climate Streamlining regulations and permitting processes to ease the establishment of new businesses Engagement/workshops with Chamber of Commerce 	<p>OPTIONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> IN-HOUSE CONSULTANT COMBINATION <p>ACTION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Implement RFI template changes – Jan 2025 Assess website and implement changes to investment data and mapping based on site selector insights – Mar 2025 Update investment marketing documents and profiles – Mar 2025 Launch targeted marketing campaign and profiling through Invest Alberta – May 2024 Schedule regional site visits relevant to Whitecourt; annual meetings – Jun 2025 Facilitate a collaborative meeting with Chamber Board Members and Planning Team for updates, resources, and reviews – Jun 2025

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM STRATEGIC WORK PROGRAM

JUNE 2025

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and support growth in retail/commercial/industrial and residential zones • Site visits/sales pitches • Identify red tape and explore potential solutions • Collaboration with Chamber of Commerce • Targeted marketing campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Create action plan based on the SCOP findings – Nov 2025 8. Finalize business cases (2-3) and promote for new business opportunities – Dec 2025+ 9. Work with local, regional, and federal economic development organizations to leverage new business growth and diversification opportunities – Dec 2025+
<p>3. EXPAND ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p><i>How do we support and foster relationships with tourism operators? How do we collaboratively assist with growing the tourism sector? How do increase tourism opportunities?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify tourism current and potential tourism operators • Funding to support tourism operators • Partnerships with Woodlands County on potential development opportunities • Promote cultural and historical sites • Organize events and festivals • Invest in tourism operator training/ workshops and collaborative networking events • Collaboration with Travel Alberta • Market experience businesses to include in tourism strategy • Encourage tourists to explore more • Self-guided tours 	<p><u>OPTIONS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IN-HOUSE 2. CONSULTANT <p><u>ACTION</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet with Travel Alberta to follow up on Northern Rockies TDZ and next steps – Jan 2025 2. Promote Tourism Grant Programs through website, social media and site visits – Feb 2025 3. Meet with Chamber Tourism Committee and identify synergies/opportunities – Mar 2025 4. Increase communication with organizations and operators through scheduled site visits; identify potential partnerships – Jun 2025 5. Facilitate tourism operator networking event with restaurants, operators, and hoteliers to identify opportunities for collaboration – Jun 2025 6. Provide support through annual grants as per 2025 budget – Oct 2025 7. Explore partnerships with Woodlands County and the province on tourism development options – Dec 2025+
<p>4. ENHANCE TOURISM MARKETING AND PROMOTION</p> <p><i>How can we focus our marketing efforts and utilize opportunities to better promote Whitecourt Tourism? How do we use marketing tools to increase overnight stays and bring awareness to tourism opportunities in Whitecourt?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing campaigns • Identify target markets • Utilize digital marketing • Leverage social media and online advertising to reach a broader audience • Enhance awareness for tourism opportunities in Whitecourt • Enhance information availability • Create engaging content and story telling • Highlight unique cultural assets and historical landmarks 	<p><u>OPTIONS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IN-HOUSE 2. CONSULTANT <p><u>ACTION</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop annual Whitecourt Tourism Visitor Guide – Jan 2025 2. Participate in Trailblazers Snowmobile Rally by hosting a checkpoint/welcome – Feb 2025 3. Identify target markets and create/implement tourism marketing strategy – Apr 2025 4. Explore opportunities through the Travel Alberta Cooperative Marketing program with regional partners to market tourism assets – May 2025 5. Create self-guided tours and/or itineraries for ready-made experiences and events – Jun 2025 6. Host micro-influencer(s) in the community for profiling Whitecourt and marketing as a tourism hotspot – Jul 2025 7. Work with operators and hoteliers to support stay and play package development – Dec 2025

CODES: BOLD CAPITALS = NOW Priorities; CAPITALS = NEXT Priorities; *Italics* = Advocacy; Regular Title Case = Operational Strategies; Completed tasks = Blue

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM STRATEGIC WORK PROGRAM

JUNE 2025

ADVOCACY / PARTNERSHIPS	OPTIONS & Action
<p><i>Advocacies are items typically addressed by Mayor and/or Council. How can the Economic Development Committee engage in active advocacy?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build partnerships.• Support nonprofit organizations on expansion of facilities, events, and initiatives that support tourism in the area.• Support post-secondary options• Health Professionals attraction and Retention Committee (H-PARC)	<p><u>OPTIONS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. IN-HOUSE2. CONSULTANT <p><u>ACTION</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Support post-secondary options and collaboration with school divisions on identified synergies.2. Support health care recruitment and increased health care services.3. Enhanced connectivity and broadband development4. Work with Woodlands County and the Province on project-based partnerships for tourism development.

CODES: **BOLD CAPITALS** = NOW Priorities; **CAPITALS** = NEXT Priorities; *Italics* = Advocacy; Regular Title Case = Operational Strategies; Completed tasks = Blue

PROJECT UPDATES HIGHLIGHTS

✓ RETAIL BUSINESS MARKET ANALYSIS ATTRACTION & RETENTION STRATEGY:

- The Business Market Analysis Attraction & Retention Strategy to support ongoing marketing and economic development strategies is underway.
- The project will identify/validate trade areas for current consumers and future growth potential along with areas of retail strength and weaknesses and which businesses are the best fit given the desire for balanced and sustainable economic growth.
- Current Progress includes:
 - Mobile Phone Tracking
 - Traffic Counts
 - Trade Area Analysis
 - Onsite Retail Inventory
 - Commercial Markey Supply
 - Retail Spending Analysis
 - Direct Interviews with Local Businesses
 - Consumer and Business Surveys

PROJECT UPDATES HIGHLIGHTS



✓ **HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ATTRACTION & RETENTION COMMITTEE (H-PARC):**

- Doctor Loan Program is being utilized by three physicians.
- Provided settlement/integration supports to health professionals and their families.
- 40 New Year greeting cards delivered to local healthcare professionals in the community.
- 25 appreciation baskets delivered to local healthcare professionals during Rural Health Week.
- “Let’s Go Rural Event” hosted on May 8, 2025
- Supported the North Alberta Medical Program Site Visit
- Upcoming Health Professionals Annual Barbecue will see an additional 40 medical students attend.

✓ **WHITECOURT TRAILBLAZERS ANNUAL FAMILY SNOWMOBILE RALLY**

- Hosted checkpoint at the Whitecourt Trailblazers Annual Family Snowmobile Rally on February 15, 2025. Attendees completed a short survey:
 - 244 participants; 52 overnight stays; with 79% staying in hotels and 21% staying with friends or family.

✓ **SPORTS HOSTING PROGRAM:**

- The Whitecourt Sports Hosting Program was established, recognizing the growing interest in the community to host provincial sporting competitions and the positive economic impact that these events bring to the community.
- In 2024, the program supported three organizations with sporting events, positively impacting the community through local spending. Total direct spending was estimated at \$269,500. These are estimates based on typical spending patterns for accommodations and food services. The total economic impact would be higher when considering indirect effects (i.e. increased business for local shops, transportation etc.). Multiplier effects (common in economic impact analysis) typically range from 1.5 to 2.0 in tourism sectors, which would suggest the total impact roughly between \$404,250 to \$539,000 in 2024.
- To date, the following applications have been supported under this program in 2025:
 - Whitecourt Taekwondo; and
 - Whitecourt Blue Dolphins Swim Club.

✓ **EXPLORE WHITECOURT | EXPLORE NWAB VIRTUAL FESTIVAL:**

- In partnership with Grande Prairie Tourism and Festival Seekers, Whitecourt Tourism hosted the #explorenwAB virtual festival for local businesses in May 2025. Tourism specific businesses were showcased through LIVE videos on social media.
- Business participants were paired with a social media & marketing coach for one on one personalized digital media training and various workshops were held.
- Promotion and marketing was completed across the province through collective marketing efforts.
- Virtual Festival statistics as of May 23, 2025:
 - Businesses that went LIVE: 18
 - Video views: 55,942
 - Engagements: 2,368 (likes, shares, comments)
- A final report is anticipated for early July.

PROJECT UPDATES HIGHLIGHTS



TOURISM ENHANCEMENT GRANT:

- The Tourism Enhancement Grant Program was established to encourage partnerships with local non-profit organizations to enhance tourism-related events and/or products. The program is intended to create a partnership in promoting local events and provide financial assistance to help develop projects and initiatives that support tourism.
- To date two organizations were successful in 2025:
 - Whitecourt & District Chamber of Commerce for the Western Canadian Rib Fest Event ; and
 - Canadian Motorcycle Tourism Association for the Ride for Vision & Valour 2025 event.



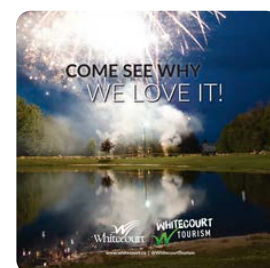
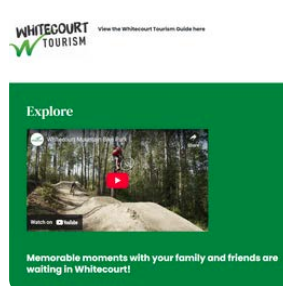
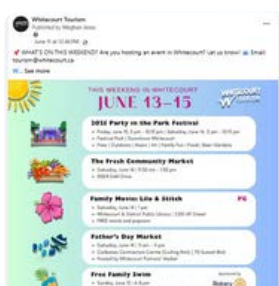
BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION HIGHLIGHTS

- Enhance investment attraction through online presence/new webpage platform telling the "Whitecourt Story" focusing on user experience, investment data, and updated content to attract and support business growth.
- Residential Development marketing underway; highlighting residential development opportunities and promoting the community for investment.
- Professional Development & Business Resource Summit – Hosted business support summit providing resources, information, and strategic guidance for businesses and new entrepreneurs to help grow their businesses.
- There have been 68 business visits conducted to date.
- Final stages of the Rural Renewal Program; three year designation concludes July 20, 2025.
- Enhancing investment pitch based on findings from the Retail Business Market Attraction & Retention Project.



ON THE HORIZON...

- 2026 Strategic Planning has been scheduled for September 2025.
- Summer Street Fest in partnership with Community Services has been scheduled for August 9 in downtown Whitecourt.
- Regional Business Visits to promote Whitecourt provincially and nationally.
- Annual Health Professionals Family BBQ - September 11, 2025
- Medical students and University of Alberta faculty and staff will be visiting Whitecourt September 8-13, 2025 as part of University of Alberta Medical Student Orientation Week.
- Career and Education EXPO / Job Fair scheduled for September 26, 2025.
- Business Market Analysis Attraction & Retention Strategy will wrap up in 2025 with findings implemented into 2026 Strategic Plan.
- Business Case review and investment pitch strategy development.

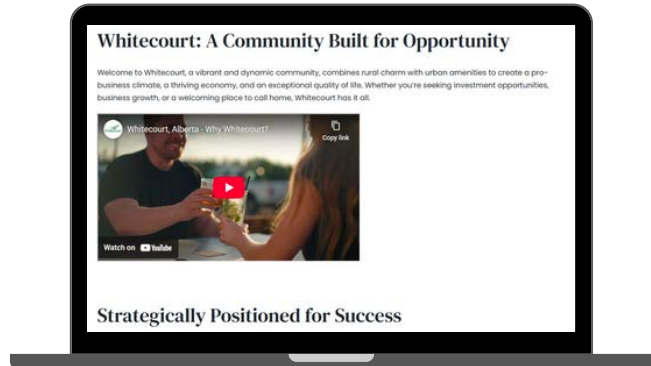


PROJECT UPDATES HIGHLIGHTS



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM QUICK LINKS

- [Whitecourt Business Directory](#)
- [Starting a Business](#)
- [Business Support Services](#)
- [Whitecourt Advantage](#)
- [Industry Insights](#)
- [Economic Development Package](#)
- [Community Profile](#)
- [Property For Sale](#)
- [Vitalization Plans & Projects](#)
- [Whitecourt Tourism Guide](#)
- [Invest in Alberta](#)



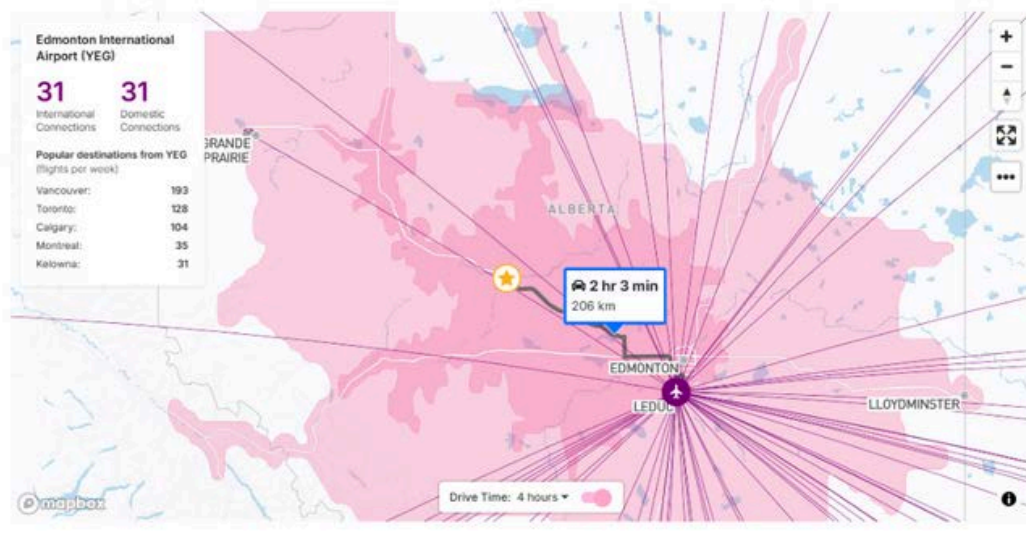
Community Promotion & Videos:

- [Why Whitecourt?](#)
- [Economic Development & Planning](#)
- [Healthcare Professionals Attraction & Retention](#)
- [Small Business Week Thank-you](#)
- [Whitecourt Tourism - Winter](#)
- [Whitecourt Winter Getaway](#)
- [Whitecourt Tourism Summer](#)



Strategically Positioned for Success

Whitecourt is strategically located 170 kilometres northwest of Edmonton, offering easy access to Alberta's capital and its infrastructure. Just a two-hour drive from Edmonton International Airport, with over 60 domestic and international routes, Whitecourt ensures seamless connectivity. Positioned along Highway 43 and the Canamex Corridor, businesses benefit from major trade routes, a full-service local airport, and CN rail access, making it a logistics hub for diverse industries.



WHY WHITECOURT?



**FORWARD THINKING
FUTURE READY**

- » Prime Location
- » Transportation Links
- » Diverse Business Support System
- » Low Tax and Utility Rates
- » Serviced Land Readily Available
- » High Quality of Life
- » A Young and Productive Workforce

←	52 minutes	Fox Creek
↙	1.0 hours	Edson
→	2.0 hours	Edmonton Int'l Airport
↖	3.0 hours	Grande Prairie
←	2.5 hours	Jasper National Park
↗	5.0 hours	Fort McMurray

COMMUNITY POPULATION **10,350**
(2024 EST.)
+1.57% increase from 2023 (10,190) ***

✓ Whitecourt has a median family income of \$117,000 compared to the Alberta median of \$96,000. ***

✓ Whitecourt has a youthful age of (35.7) and a high share of working age population.

✓ Whitecourt has 683 businesses locally and 93 incorporations.

✓ The average assessment value of a single family home is \$344,500.



**AVERAGE AGE IS
A YOUTHFUL**

35 YEARS

*** One of the Youngest
Communities in Canada



68.6%**



WORKING AGE POPULATION

WATER TREATMENT PLANT
CAPABLE OF SERVING OVER DOUBLE
THE CURRENT SIZE OF WHITECOURT



**A VARIETY OF SERVICED, INDUSTRIAL LAND
AVAILABLE WITH LOW INDUSTRIAL TAX RATE**

**HOME TO INDUSTRY AND
SERVICE PROVIDERS**

**AVAILABLE
COMMUNITY
WORKFORCE**

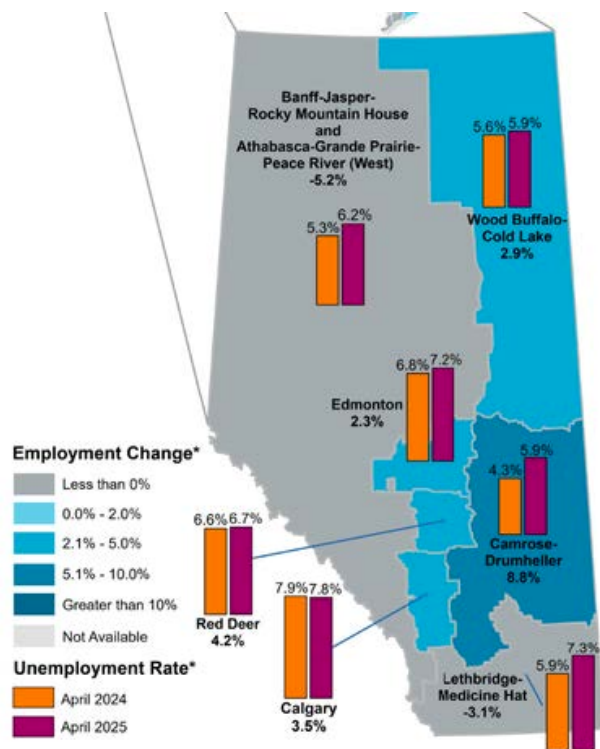


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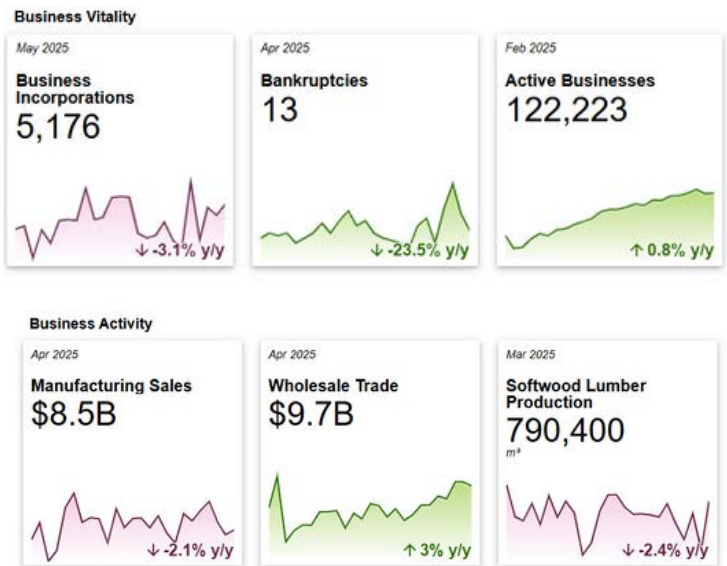
Alberta Regional Dashboard,
<https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/whitecourt/#/>

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

A summary of Alberta's key economic indicators.



*Based on three-month moving averages.



Source:

Economic Dashboard, Government of Alberta, June 2025

<https://economicdashboard.alberta.ca/dashboard/>

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Key Energy and Economic Assumptions

Fiscal Year Assumptions ^a	2022-23 Actuals	2023-24 Actuals	2024-25 Estimate	2025-26 Forecast	2026-27 Forecast	2027-28 Forecast
Crude Oil Prices^b						
WTI (US\$/bbl)	89.69	77.83	74.00	68.00	71.00	71.50
Light-Heavy Differential (US\$/bbl)	20.77	17.29	13.20	17.10	16.50	15.60
WCS @ Hardisty (Cdn\$/bbl)	90.62	81.67	84.70	73.10	75.80	75.80
Natural Gas Price^b						
Alberta Reference Price (Cdn\$/GJ)	4.63	2.07	1.20	2.50	3.10	2.90
Production^b						
Conventional Crude Oil (thousands of barrels/day)	497	511	528	519	512	504
Raw Bitumen (thousands of barrels/day)	3,250	3,332	3,455	3,558	3,689	3,752
Natural Gas (billions of cubic feet)	4,265	4,267	4,304	4,354	4,354	4,354
Interest Rates^b						
3-month Canada Treasury Bills (%)	3.17	4.88	3.70	2.30	2.30	2.30
10-year Canada Bonds (%)	3.05	3.46	3.30	3.10	3.10	3.10
Exchange Rate (US\$/Cdn\$)^b	75.6	74.2	71.7	69.6	71.9	73.8

Calendar Year Assumptions ^a	2022 Actuals	2023 Actuals	2024 Estimate	2025 Forecast	2026 Forecast	2027 Forecast	2028 Forecast
Gross Domestic Product							
Nominal (billions of dollars)	472.8	452.4	476.6	482.5	497.0	514.4	536.7
% change	24.4	-4.3	5.3	1.2	3.0	3.5	4.3
Real (billions of 2017 dollars)	348.7	356.8	367.3	373.8	380.3	388.5	397.2
% change	6.0	2.3	3.0	1.8	1.7	2.1	2.2
Other Indicators							
Employment (thousands)	2,356	2,443	2,519 ^c	2,567	2,609	2,659	2,713
% change	4.9	3.7	3.1 ^c	1.9	1.6	1.9	2.0
Unemployment Rate (%)	5.8	5.9	7.0 ^c	7.4	7.2	6.9	6.6
Average Weekly Earnings (% change)	2.5	2.1	3.5	3.2	2.8	2.6	2.5
Primary Household Income (% change)	10.4	5.7	7.1	4.8	4.2	4.3	4.3
Net Corporate Operating Surplus (% change)	75.2	-26.9	0.0	-9.0	1.2	3.0	3.5
Housing Starts (thousands of units)	36.5	36.0	47.8 ^c	43.0	40.8	38.3	37.8
Alberta Consumer Price Index (% change)	6.4	3.3	2.9 ^c	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.2
Retail Sales (% change)	6.9	4.3	1.8	3.7	2.8	3.4	3.9
Population (thousands)	4,511	4,685	4,889 ^c	5,009	5,080	5,150	5,232
% change	1.8	3.9	4.4 ^c	2.5	1.4	1.4	1.6
Net Migration (thousands)	63.4	159.1	189.1 ^c	102.2	51.9	49.9	61.6

^a Forecast was finalized on February 6, 2025

^b Forecasts have been rounded

^c Actual

Source:

Budget 2025 – 2025-28 Fiscal Plan, Government of Alberta, February 2025

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/budget-2025>

