



Labour Market Bulletin

Alberta

March 2022



This Labour Market Bulletin provides an analysis of Labour Force Survey results for the province of Alberta, including the regions of Calgary, Edmonton, Central Alberta and Mountain Parks, Southern Alberta, and Northern Alberta.

OVERVIEW

Public health restrictions implemented to limit the spread of the Omicron variant were gradually lifted in Alberta during the first quarter of 2022. On March 1, Alberta entered step two of its three step plan to lift all public health restrictions associated with the pandemic. Some of the restrictions lifted included all those remaining on schools, youth screening for sports and entertainment, capacity restrictions on large entertainment venues, and indoor and outdoor social gathering limits, including for all weddings and funeral events. The provincial mask mandate was also lifted, along with restrictions on interactive activities, table limits, liquor sales and closing times for bars, restaurants and other food serving businesses. Mandatory work-from-home requirements were also lifted.¹

The province has stated that the decision to move to stage three depends on key data points, including hospitalizations. Once the province moves to stage three, all remaining restrictions will be lifted, including a mandatory requirement for active COVID-19 cases to isolate.²

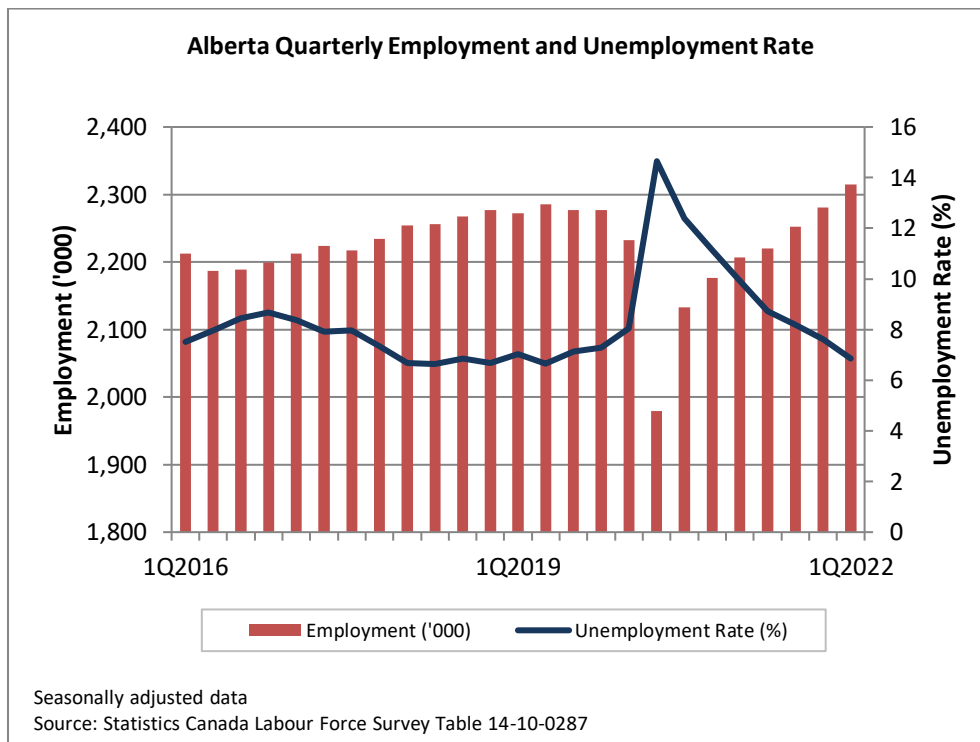
Employment in the first quarter of 2022 averaged around 2.3 million, representing an increase of 33,500 jobs (+1.5%) over the previous quarter. On an annual basis employment increased by 108,000 jobs (+4.9%) in the first quarter of 2022 compared to the first quarter of 2021. Full-time employment essentially stayed the same as the previous quarter whereas part-time employment increased by 26,600 jobs (+6.3%). The gradual lifting of restrictions has helped employment in sectors where part time work is common, such as accommodation and food services and information, culture and recreation. The lifting of public health restrictions combined with high energy prices has helped push economic recovery in the province.

Alberta Quarterly Labour Force Statistics

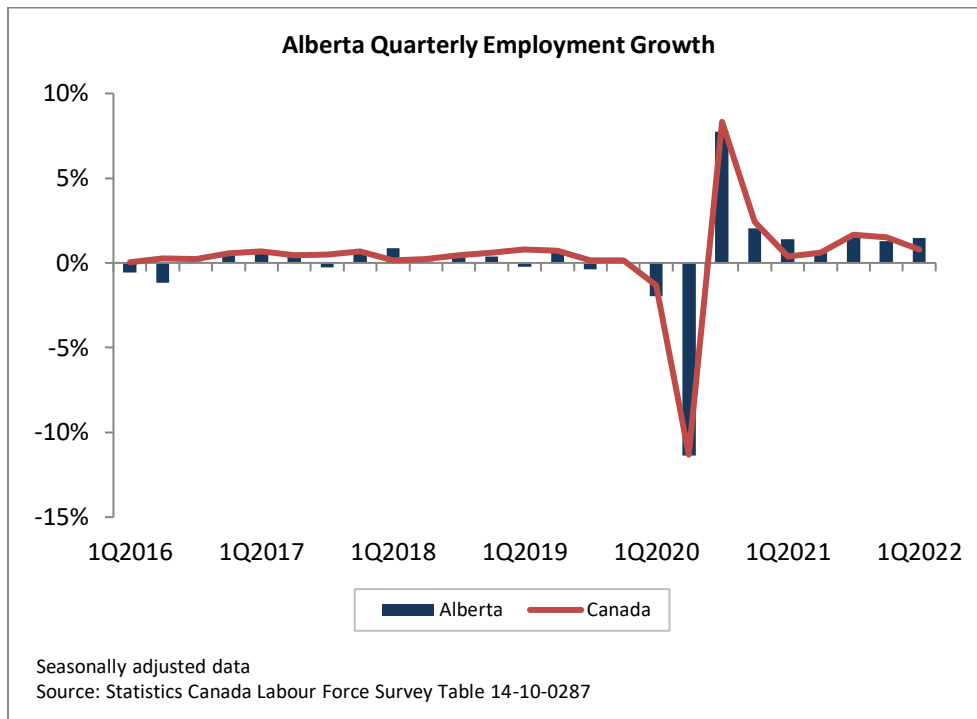
Seasonally adjusted data	1st Quarter 2022	4th Quarter 2021	1st Quarter 2021	Quarterly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	3,580.2	3,562.1	3,530.8	18.1	0.5	49.4	1.4
Labour Force ('000)	2,485.1	2,469.2	2,449.2	15.9	0.6	35.9	1.5
Employment ('000)	2,314.7	2,281.2	2,206.7	33.5	1.5	108.0	4.9
Full-Time ('000)	1,863.1	1,856.4	1,781.1	6.7	0.4	82.0	4.6
Part-Time ('000)	451.5	424.9	425.6	26.6	6.3	25.9	6.1
Unemployment ('000)	170.5	188.0	242.5	-17.5	-9.3	-72.0	-29.7
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.9	7.6	9.9	-0.7	-	-3.0	-
Participation Rate (%)	69.4	69.3	69.4	0.1	-	0.0	-
Employment Rate (%)	64.7	64.0	62.5	0.7	-	2.2	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287, formerly CANSIM 282-0087



Unemployment decreased by 17,500 (-9.3%) in the first quarter of 2022. The unemployment rate decreased slightly by -0.7 percentage points. This was the lowest quarterly unemployment rate recorded in Alberta since the pandemic began. High energy prices and record oil production is supporting strong economic growth throughout the province. Additionally, the gradual lifting of public health restrictions has improved employment in the accommodation and food services sector.



Alberta Quarterly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally adjusted data	1st Quarter 2022 (%)	4 th Quarter 2021 (%)	1st Quarter 2021 (%)	Quarterly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	6.9	7.6	9.9	-0.7	-3.0
25 years and over	5.8	6.7	8.5	-0.9	-2.7
Men - 25 years and over	5.8	6.5	8.3	-0.7	-2.5
Women - 25 years and over	5.8	7.0	8.7	-1.2	-2.9
15 to 24 years	13.4	13.1	19.2	0.3	-5.8
Men - 15 to 24 years	13.7	15.2	19.6	-1.5	-5.9
Women - 15 to 24 years	13.1	11.0	18.6	2.1	-5.5

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

Between the fourth quarter of 2021 and the first quarter of 2022, young men (aged 15-24 years) had the most significant decline in the unemployment rate, with a -1.5 percentage point drop. The unemployment rate for young women increased by 2.1 percentage points to end up at 13.1% in the first quarter of 2022. The unemployment rate for young workers (15-24 years) is at 13.4% in the first quarter of 2022, compared to 5.8% for workers 25 years and over. The unemployment rate for young workers is likely to improve as students begin to take up employment for the summer.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Employment in the services-producing sector increased slightly (+0.7%) in the first quarter of 2022. In contrast, employment in the goods-producing sector increased by +21,300 jobs (+4%). On an annual basis, employment in the services-producing sector is up substantially by +103,700 jobs (+6.3%), and employment in the goods-producing sector is only up slightly (+0.8%). The larger overall gain in the services producing sector is due to the significant recovery that the retail, food service, and tourism industries have undergone in the last year in periods when public health orders were more relaxed. The goods-producing sector was affected relatively less by public health restrictions since the beginning of the pandemic, though periods of weak economic activity slowed subsequent employment growth. Recently, high energy prices have driven up employment in the goods-producing sector.

Alberta Quarterly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally adjusted data ('000)	1st Quarter 2022	4 th Quarter 2021	1st Quarter 2021	Quarterly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	2,314.7	2,281.2	2,206.7	33.5	1.5	108.0	4.9
Goods-producing sector	553.8	532.5	549.5	21.3	4.0	4.3	0.8
Agriculture	33.6	33.2	38.9	0.4	1.2	-5.3	-13.6
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	147.2	141.5	138.6	5.7	4.0	8.6	6.2
Utilities	18.5	18.2	24.0	0.3	1.6	-5.5	-22.9
Construction	227.4	220.4	225.3	7.0	3.2	2.1	0.9
Manufacturing	127.1	119.2	122.7	7.9	6.6	4.4	3.6
Services-producing sector	1,760.9	1,748.7	1,657.2	12.2	0.7	103.7	6.3
Trade	362.6	355.9	334.7	6.7	1.9	27.9	8.3
Transportation and warehousing	128.8	136.9	129.2	-8.1	-5.9	-0.4	-0.3
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	114.7	120.2	109.7	-5.5	-4.6	5.0	4.6
Professional, scientific and technical services	195.6	193.6	179.3	2.0	1.0	16.3	9.1
Business, building and other support services	74.0	71.5	74.9	2.5	3.5	-0.9	-1.2
Educational services	161.9	167.4	163.9	-5.5	-3.3	-2.0	-1.2
Health care and social assistance	316.2	306.3	308.8	9.9	3.2	7.4	2.4
Information, culture and recreation	79.2	68.5	60.2	10.7	15.6	19.0	31.6
Accommodation and food services	129.7	121.4	98.5	8.3	6.8	31.2	31.7
Other services	93.4	98.2	98.2	-4.8	-4.9	-4.8	-4.9
Public administration	104.8	108.8	100.0	-4.0	-3.7	4.8	4.8

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table T14-10-0355, formerly CANSIM 282-0088

Goods-producing industries

Many industries and businesses in the goods-producing sector were deemed essential and permitted to continue operating through the peak of the pandemic. Nevertheless, weak economic activity and persistent uncertainty have weighed heavily on the sector.

Increased demand, high energy prices and record levels of oil production have supported an annual increase of employment in the **resource extraction (forestry, mining, and oil and gas)** of +8,600 jobs (+6.2%). Employment was also up by +5,700 jobs (+4%) on a quarterly basis. Oil production in Alberta was at 16.6 million cubic metres in February 2022, up +4.7% compared to February 2021. Non-conventional (or oil sands) production, which constituted 85.6% of all oil production in Alberta in January 2022, increased by +3.3% year-over-year, while production of conventional oil increased by +14%.³ The price of Western Canadian Select averaged \$79.56 USD in Q1 2022. This was a +74% increase from the average price in Q1 2021 and nearly double the price from Q1 2020.⁴ Western sanctions on Russian oil due to the war in Ukraine, as well as demand outpacing global supply, has pushed the price of oil even higher in recent months.⁵ The Conference Board of Canada projects that prices should remain in the low \$70 USD a barrel range through 2022.⁶

Employment in **the construction** sector increased by +7,000 jobs (+3.2%) on a quarterly basis. The construction industry also posted an annual employment increase of +2,100 (+0.9%) from Q1 2021 to Q1 2022. The seasonally adjusted value of building permits issued in Alberta fell by \$21 million (-1.7%) in February. The monthly drop was due to non-residential permits (-9.8%), which decreased after a sizable gain in January. The value of commercial permits dropped by \$61 million (-16.5%), offsetting minor gains in commercial and governmental permits. Regardless, on an unadjusted basis, the total value of Alberta's building permits were \$125 million (+6.8%) higher through the first two months of the year, compared to 2021.⁷

Services-producing industries

The services-producing sector includes labour intensive and public-facing industries such as wholesale and retail trade, and food and accommodation. These industries were initially among the most impacted during the height of COVID-19 related closures. In recent months employment has begun to recover, especially during periods when public health orders were more relaxed. However employment still remains below pre-pandemic levels in most industries.

Employment increased by +10,700 jobs (+15.6%) on a quarterly basis in the **information, culture and recreation** sector. Employment in the sector has likely been positively affected by the lifting of pandemic related restrictions, particularly the lifting of capacity restrictions on large entertainment venues. Employment in the sector is also ramping up in anticipation of a busy summer tourism season. However, many business in this sector are facing acute labour shortages which threatens to put a damper on the expected busy season.⁸

The **Accommodation and food services** sector had an employment increase of +8,300 jobs (+6.8%) on a quarterly basis. The lifting of pandemic related restrictions, including those on dancing and mingling, table limits, liquor sales and closing times for bars, restaurants and other food serving businesses has helped employment in the sector. Employment should continue to increase as the sector ramps up for what is expected to be a busy tourism season. However, much like the **information, culture and recreation** sector, the **accommodation and food services** sector is currently experiencing labour shortages.⁹

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

The statistics for the economic regions are not seasonally adjusted and should only be compared on a year-over-year basis. Employment is sometimes influenced by seasonal and calendar effects occurring at the same time and with the same magnitude every year, which can bring about changes in the data that make quarterly comparisons difficult.

In the first quarter of 2022, employment increased on an annual basis in every economic region, as the labour market improved significantly from the same period last year. **Lethbridge and Medicine Hat and Wood Buffalo-Cold Lake** had the largest employment gains on a percentage basis at +10.4% and +6.9% respectively. **Red Deer**, meanwhile, had the smallest employment gains, at + 0.5%.

Alberta Quarterly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

Seasonally unadjusted data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	1st Quarter 2022 ('000)	1st Quarter 2021 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	1st Quarter 2022 (%)	1st Quarter 2021 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Alberta	2,285.0	2,176.1	5.0	7.1	10.5	-3.4
Economic Regions						
Lethbridge - Medicine Hat	143.1	129.6	10.4	5.5	9.5	-4.0
Camrose - Drumheller	90.7	85.3	6.3	5.8	9.1	-3.3
Calgary	890.9	838.2	6.3	7.6	10.4	-2.8
Banff-Jasper-Rocky Mountain House and Athabasca-Grand Prairie-Peace River	184.0	176.6	4.2	5.3	10.0	-4.7
Red Deer	106.6	106.1	0.5	6.9	10.2	-3.3
Edmonton	795.6	771.1	3.2	7.5	11.3	-3.8
Wood Buffalo - Cold Lake	74.1	69.3	6.9	6.1	9.1	-3.0

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0387, formerly CANSIM 282-0122

Lethbridge-Medicine Hat saw the largest employment increase on a percentage basis of any economic region. In the first quarter employment increased by 13,500 jobs (+10.4%) compared to the last year. Employment has partly been helped by a number of recent announcements regarding renewable energy in the region. Invinity Energy Systems and Elemental Energy are partnering on the construction of a solar plant coupled to a technologically advanced battery storage complex at Chappice Lake, near Medicine Hat. The project is backed by Emissions Reduction Alberta.¹⁰ Evolgen is also planning to start construction on a solar farm, Spring Coulee Solar, in summer 2022. The facility near Cardston is expected to be complete in 2023. Once operational, Scotiabank will become the sole proprietor, purchasing 100% of the electricity generated by the facility.¹¹ Additionally, MasTec Canada is planning to fill 220-230 positions for construction of the second phase of the EDF Renewables' Cypress Hills wind farm. A range of positions are available from construction management to concrete workers. Construction is expected to start in March and be complete in December 2022.¹²

Year-over-year, **Camrose – Drumheller** employment increased by 5,400 jobs (+6.3%). Alberta Safety Services and Employment Testing Ltd. has opened in Hanna. The company offers health and safety training programs, and

occupational drug and alcohol collection and testing services. The company says that demand for their services has increased as several windmill projects are underway in the area.¹³

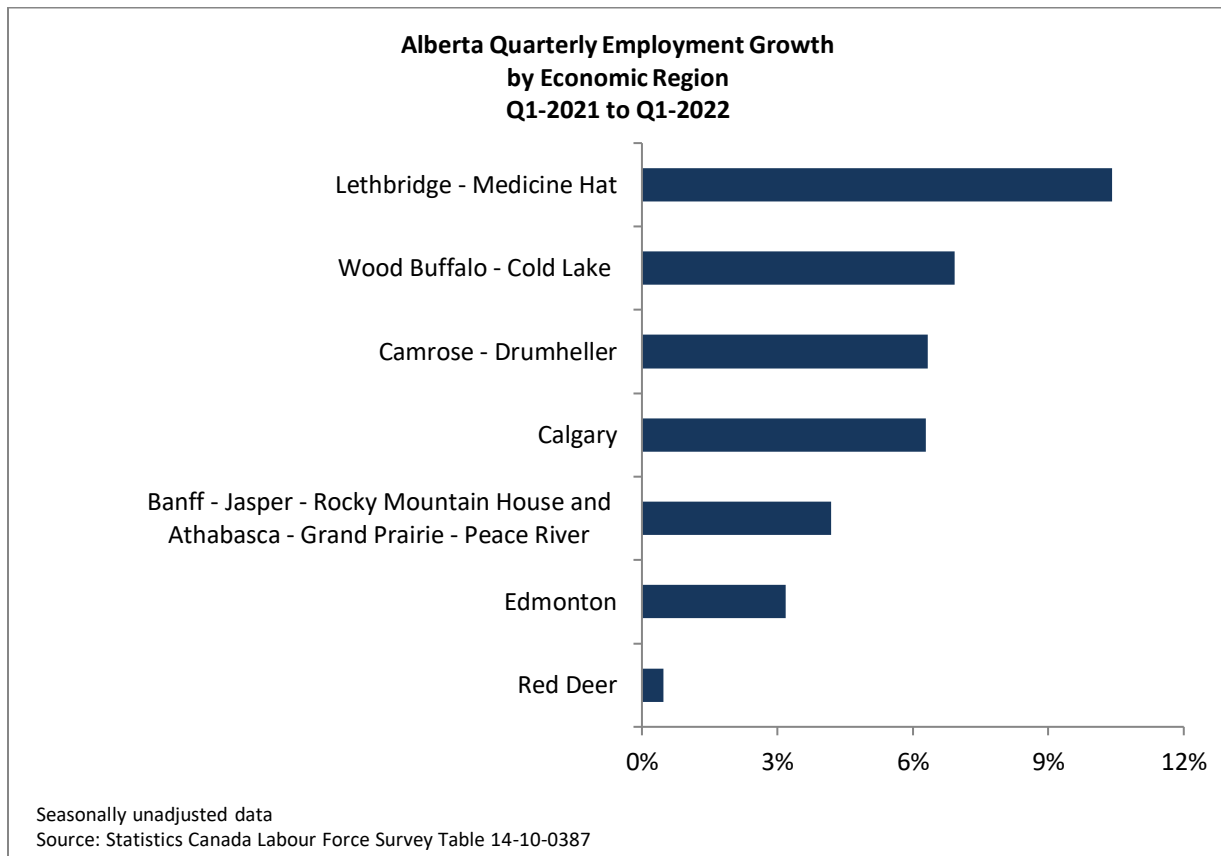
Employment in **Banff – Jasper – Rocky Mountain House** and **Athabasca – Grande Prairie – Peace River** increased by +4.2% (+4,400 jobs) and the unemployment rate dropped by -4.7 percentage points to 5.3%. The Banff – Jasper – Rocky Mountain House economic region is experiencing acute labour shortages ahead of what is expected to be a busy upcoming tourism season. In Jasper there were 179 seasonal job postings that appeared on the Jasper Employment and Education Centre website.¹⁴ Businesses in Banff and Canmore are continuing to deal with staff shortages and a general lack of job applicants. Hotel, retail, restaurant, sightseeing and ski resorts rely heavily on foreign workers, who are mostly absent from the job market this year.¹⁵

In **Red Deer** employment levels have barely increased since this time last year (+0.5%). However, there has been recent announcements that should help job growth in the region going forward. In a major piece of news for the region, the Government of Alberta is committing \$1.8B to the expansion of the Red Deer Regional Hospital by its scheduled completion in 2030 or 2031. An estimated \$193 million will be spent over the next three years for planning, and construction is expected to start within this timeframe.¹⁶

Employment in **Wood Buffalo – Cold Lake** increased by +4,800 jobs (6.9%) on an annual basis. In the short term, infrastructure spending by municipalities will likely support job growth in the construction industry. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has approved a 2022 capital budget of \$128M for projects including flood mitigation design and construction, rural water and sewer services and runway rehabilitation at the Fort Chipewyan Airport.¹⁷

Employment in the **Calgary** region increased by +52,700 jobs (+6.3%) on an annual basis. The unemployment rate was at 7.6%, down -2.8 percentage points from last year. Job growth in the Calgary region has been strong in the first quarter of 2022. In February, sixteen companies were hiring for more than 350 jobs in Calgary in a variety of occupations including computer programmers, cyber security, retail sales, and finance specialists among others.¹⁸ Also, EY Canada is launching its first Canadian-based EY Finance Centre of Excellence in Calgary. The centre is expected to create 200 new jobs over the next three years, including 50 immediate new hires starting in early 2022.¹⁹

In **Edmonton**, employment was up by +24,500 jobs (+3.2) compared to a year ago. The unemployment rate dropped by 3.8 percentage points to be at 7.5%. There were several high profile announcements in the health and social assistance sector in the Edmonton economic region. Firstly, the City of Edmonton approved \$18.3M to help convert the Coliseum Inn, a former hotel, into 98 units of supportive housing. Another \$18.3M for the project is also budgeted from the federal government and the city's affordable housing reserve.²⁰ Also, Covenant Health is building a new \$250M wellness community in southeast Edmonton that will include a health centre, multigenerational housing, an integrated seniors' continuing care centre, surgical services or expansion space as required, and commercial buildings. The project is being developed through a public-private partnership with Rohit Group of Companies.²¹



Note: In preparing this document, the authors have taken care to provide clients with labour market information that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since this document was published. Users are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect official policies of Employment and Social Development Canada.

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For further information, please contact the LMI team at: http://www.esdc.gc.ca/cqi-bin/contact/edsc-esdc/eng/contact_us.aspx?section=lmi

For information on the Labour Force Survey, please visit the Statistics Canada Web site at: www.statcan.gc.ca

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 - ² CTV News (April 1, 2022). [Kenney unconcerned by rise in COVID-19 cases, encourages Albertans to seek booster shots.](#)
 - ³ Government of Alberta (April 8, 2022). [Oil Production.](#)
 - ⁴ Kent Group (April 11, 2022). [Petroleum price data.](#)
 - ⁵ New York Times (February 2, 2022). [Why are oil prices so high and will they stay that way?](#)
 - ⁶ Conference Board of Canada (February 15, 2022). [Virus Remains a Driving, Uncertain Force in Oil and Gas: Canada's Two-Year Energy Outlook.](#)
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 - ¹² Medicine Hat News (February 26, 2022). [Company looking to hire local as it returns to region to manage wind farm construction.](#)
 - ¹³ Hanna Herald (February 01, 2022). [A.S.S.E.T. Ltd. opens its doors in Hanna.](#)
 - ¹⁴ Jasper Fitzhugh (March 15, 2022). [Jasper warns of 'severe' labour shortage.](#)
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 - ¹⁸ DailyHive (January 25, 2022). [16 companies hiring for more than 350 jobs in Calgary this February.](#)
 - ¹⁹ Invest Alberta Corporation (January 25, 2022). [EY chooses Alberta as home for its Canadian Finance Centre of Excellence.](#)
 - ²⁰ Edmonton Journal (February 7, 2022). [Council approves \\$18.3-million plan to turn Coliseum Inn to supportive housing.](#)
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