

# Labour Force Developments

March 10, 2006

February 2006

## February Highlights

Employment in Alberta increased by 25,100 jobs in February, lowering the unemployment rate to a 30-year low of 3.1 per cent. Alberta continues to have the lowest unemployment rate among the provinces and is well below the national average of 6.4 per cent.

## Alberta

The Alberta economy generated 25,100 jobs in February, its second largest monthly gain on record, as both full and part-time jobs showed strong increases.

Unadjusted employment increased by 32,600 in February. Most of these gains were in service producing industries. Within services, the largest gains were reported in occupations related to trades, transport and equipment operators (9,400) and in occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities (8,900).

Wage pressures continue to build, with February's average hourly wage rate up 6.1 per cent over the past twelve months, almost twice the pace of the national average of 3.3 per cent.

Shortages of workers, both skilled and unskilled, continue to be reported across the province and across industries. Athabasca (2.4 per cent) and Camrose (2.4 per cent) are experiencing very low unemployment rates.

## Canada

The Canadian economy gained 24,700 jobs in February. Combined with 18,000 fewer people

### ALBERTA FEBRUARY HIGHLIGHTS

<b>Employment</b>	
Monthly Net Jobs	+25,100
% Change	1.4%
<b>Unemployment Rate (February 2006)</b>	
Alberta	3.1%
Canada	6.4%

in the labour force, the national unemployment rate decreased to 6.4 per cent in February, matching the thirty-year low reached in November 2005.

Although February's employment gains were mostly part-time and manufacturers in the east continue to adjust to higher dollar, the overall national labour market remains strong with 6 of 10 provinces posting gains (on a seasonally adjusted basis) in February.

Canadian productivity increased by 1.1 per cent in 2005, its highest gain since 2002. Although productivity growth was stronger in the United States in 2005 (2.7 per cent), the gap between the two countries was the lowest in five years and was solely due to the difference in GDP growth as both countries saw a reduction in hours worked and increased labour costs.

## United States

In February, 243,000 jobs were added to the US economy. With a 4.8 per cent unemployment rate, the United States labour market continues to remain tight. Average weekly and hourly earnings were up 3.5 per cent from a year ago in February.

**TABLE 1. ALBERTA REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT**

Regional Employment 3 Month Moving Avg.	Edmonton Region	Calgary Region	Wood Buffalo- Cold Lake	Athabasca- Grande Prairie	Red Deer	Camrose- Drumheller	Banff- Jasper- Rocky Mt. House	Lethbridge- Medicine Hat
<b>Jan. 2006-Feb. 2006</b>								
Change	700	6,300	500	-1,400	-600	-700	700	100
Growth Rate	0.1%	0.9%	0.8%	-1.1%	-0.6%	-0.7%	1.5%	0.1%
<b>Feb. 2005- Feb. 2006</b>								
Change	-9,000	39,300	2,500	9,100	2,100	2,300	-200	-100
Growth Rate	-1.6%	6.2%	4.2%	7.7%	2.3%	2.3%	-0.4%	-0.1%
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey