

Labour Force Developments

June 9, 2006

May 2006

May Highlights

The Alberta economy added 31,600 jobs in May, the largest one month gain on record, helping to maintain the lowest unemployment rate among the provinces at 3.4 per cent. The national unemployment rate dropped 0.3 percentage points to 6.1 per cent, its lowest rate in more than 30 years.

Alberta

Following a modest increase of 2,700 jobs last month, Alberta's economy generated 31,600 jobs in May. All of the employment gains for the month were in full-time jobs. In the first five months of 2006, employment has increased by 64,840, or 3.6 per cent, the strongest growth since 1998. Labour market strength is being seen throughout the province, with monthly employment increasing in every region of Alberta.

Alberta's employment rate (the number of people employed as a percentage of the population 15 years and older) reached a record high of 71.4 per cent in May and continues to be well above the national average (63.2 per cent). With a large influx of migrants to Alberta, the provincial labour force also increased by 30,600, nearly matching the increase in employment (+31,600). Despite this large increase in the labour force, the unemployment rate dropped to 3.4 per cent, from 3.5 per cent in April.

Among Canada's 27 major cities, Calgary (3.3 per cent) and Edmonton (3.6 per cent) had the two lowest unemployment rates for May.

ALBERTA APRIL HIGHLIGHTS

Employment	
Monthly Net Jobs	+31,600
% Change	1.7%
Unemployment Rate (May 2006)	
Alberta	3.4%
Canada	6.1%

Canada

The Canadian economy gained an estimated 96,700 jobs in May, lowering the unemployment rate to 6.1 per cent, its lowest level since December 1974. During the month, 150,800 full-time jobs were created, while part-time employment declined by 54,200 jobs. The provinces with the largest increases in employment were Ontario (+34,000), Alberta (+31,600) and Québec (+30,500).

The largest gains in employment for the month were in the services sector (+106,400), with most of these gains in finance, insurance, real estate and leasing (+31,100), health care (+23,100) and public administration (+22,000). The manufacturing sector continues to struggle with an appreciating dollar, as employment in the manufacturing sector declined by 21,700.

United States

The U.S. economy added just 75,000 jobs in May, less than half the market forecast of 170,000. Nonetheless, the unemployment rate dropped 0.1 percentage points to 4.6 per cent, which is the lowest rate since July 2001.

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
Mar. 2006-Apr. 2006								
Change	8,800	8,600	900	2,300	1,900	4,200	100	2,100
Growth Rate	1.6%	1.3%	1.4%	1.8%	2.0%	4.1%	0.2%	1.6%
Apr. 2005-Apr. 2006								
Change	8,500	48,400	4,000	5,600	5,400	7,200	-1,100	400
Growth Rate	1.5%	7.5%	6.8%	4.5%	5.9%	7.2%	-2.2%	0.3%
Unemployment Rate	3.7%	3.2%	4.8%	3.1%	4.5%	3.1%	n/a	2.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey