

# Labour Market Review

## February 2024

Paapa Essel Corporate Economist | Mark Angelo Uy Corporate Research Analyst | Estella Scruggs Sr. Corporate Research Analyst

March 8, 2024

### Highlights

February 2024

#### Total Employment

Calgary Economic Region  
(Seasonally unadjusted 3-month-moving-average)



**February 2024** from Jan 2024 from Feb 2023  
**963,600** ▼4,900 ▲49,300

#### Unemployment Rates

Seasonally adjusted Seasonally unadjusted Feb 2024 Feb 2023

Canada	5.8%	5.1%
Alberta	6.2%	5.9%
Calgary Census Metropolitan Area*	6.1%	6.5%
Calgary Economic Region*	6.3%	6.7%

\* 3-month-moving-average

#### Average Wage Rates

Calgary Census Metropolitan Area  
Feb 2024, year-over-year change



Hourly ▲1.4% Weekly ▲1.4%

#### Employment Insurance

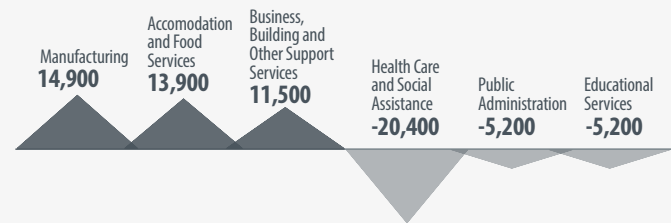
Calgary Census Metropolitan Area

December 2023 **16,390** recipients



#### Most Job Gains and Job Losses by Industry

Feb 2024, year-over-year change



### The unemployment rate for the Calgary Economy Region (CER) is down compared to last year.

The Calgary Economic Region's (CER) three-month moving average unemployment rate<sup>1</sup> fell from 6.7 per cent in February 2023 to 6.3 per cent in February 2024. The CER's labour force grew<sup>2</sup> by 4.9 per cent in February 2024 year-over-year (y-o-y), while employment increased at a faster rate of 5.4 per cent, causing the unemployment rate to drop. Alberta's (6.2 per cent) and Canada's (5.8 per cent) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rates rose by 0.0 and 0.1 percentage points month-over-month (m-o-m), respectively.

### Participation rates are on a downward trend in the CER.

Despite the growth in the labour force and the number of jobs added, working-age people willing and able to work have been on a downward trend. The participation rate, which measures the percentage of working-age people in the labour force, has declined since 2023. In February 2024, the CER labour force participation rate fell by 0.1 percentage points y-o-y to 69.3 per cent, continuing last year's downward trend.

### Calgary and Toronto saw an uptick in unemployment from January 2024.

Chart 2 compares unemployment rates in February 2024 across major Canadian Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA). Calgary and Toronto both saw the largest increases in unemployment rates, both registering a 0.3 percentage point increase. The Calgary CMA's unemployment for February 2024 stood at 6.1 per cent, ranking only lower than Toronto (7.1 per cent) and Edmonton (6.6 per cent). The Toronto CMA currently has the highest unemployment rate across major Canadian cities for the month of February 2024.

### In addition to the uptick in Calgary's unemployment rate from January, slight signs of "hidden" unemployment exist.

In addition to the uptick in Calgary's unemployment rate, other indications of challenges in the labour market are starting to emerge. There are signs of "hidden unemployment" or discouraged workers emerging across the province. The number of persons not in the labour force but wanting work rose by 48 per cent y-o-y across the province in February 2024 (refer to Chart 9). This increase is not only attributable to discouraged workers but also

to people who cannot work for other reasons such as school, illness, and personal or family responsibilities.

Further evidence of this trend can be seen when assessing the number of involuntary part-time workers. That is the number of part-time workers who are looking for full-time jobs. The number saw a slight uptick in the month of February 2024, rising by one per cent, y-o-y (refer to chart 9).

### There has been a reduction in how long it takes unemployed persons to find jobs in Alberta<sup>3</sup>.

The average number of weeks it takes job seekers to find jobs has fallen from January 2024 (refer to Chart 10). On average, it took 19 weeks for an unemployed person to find a job in Alberta last year. Chart 10 shows a rising trend in the average duration of unemployment starting in September last year. However, there was a m-o-m fall in the average duration of unemployment for the month of February 2024. Recent data from Statistics Canada shows it takes approximately 19 weeks for an unemployed person to find a job in Alberta.

In addition, the proportion of unemployed persons who remained without a job for 27 weeks or more fell after rising for three consecutive months (refer to chart 10), from 20.7 per cent in January 2024 to 17.1 per cent in February 2024.

### Employment in the health sector is down.

The CER added 49,300 positions between February 2023 and February 2024, with full-time employment up 18,300 and part-time employment up 31,000 y-o-y. By industry, the goods-producing sector gained 21,700 jobs y-o-y, led by Manufacturing (+14,900) and Construction (+7,300). The services-producing sector grew by 27,600 y-o-y, led by Accommodation and Food Services (+13,900) and Transportation and Warehousing (+8,500).

Employment in Health Care and Social Assistance has fallen significantly this year. The number of jobs within the industry fell for the sixth consecutive month, recording a 16 per cent decline y-o-y and a loss of approximately 20,000 jobs in the same period. This trend comes at a time when a number of health practitioners across Alberta have expressed potentially leaving Alberta's health-care system either by moving to another province or early retirement, citing financial challenges and burnout as their primary reasons (source: Alberta Medical Association).

### There has been an uptick in layoffs across the province.

Layoffs have been rising across Canada as firms cut operational costs in response to the challenging economic climate, and Alberta has not been spared either. Most recently, Calgary-based Enbridge announced it would cut 650 jobs to reduce costs. Bell Canada also recently announced it will be cutting around nine percent of its workforce, which will impact workers across Alberta.

As of February 2024, the number of workers that were laid off across the province rose from 118,500 to 134,400 y-o-y, marking a 13.4 per cent rise (refer to chart 9).

### Living costs continue to outpace wage growth in the Calgary CMA.

Statistics Canada's recently released Consumer Price Index (CPI) data showed an uptick in inflation for the third consecutive month. For the Calgary CMA, inflation jumped from 3.9 per cent in December 2023 to 4.1 per cent in January 2024. This contrasts with the fall in inflation seen at the national level, from 3.4 per cent in December 2023 to 2.9 per cent in January 2024. A rise in utility costs and high rental prices drove Calgary's inflation.

As a result, the disparity between wage growth and living cost growth continues to widen. Chart 7 shows inflation accelerated between October 2023 and January 2024, while average hourly wage growth dropped within the same period, contributing to the fall in real wages. Real average hourly wage for the Calgary CMA declined from \$22.7 in January 2023 to \$21.9 in January 2024, marking a 3.7 per cent y-o-y decline.

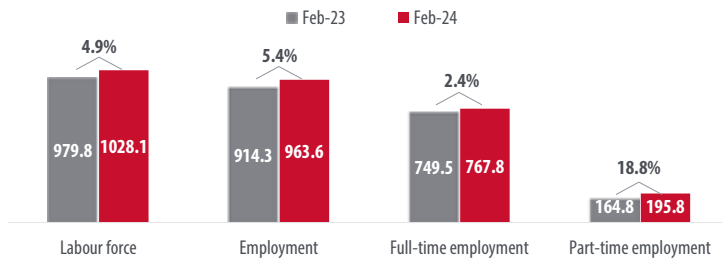
<sup>1</sup> All statistics referenced are seasonally unadjusted unless stated otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> All growth or changes referenced are year-over-year (y-o-y) unless stated otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> Data Referenced in this section is seasonally adjusted.

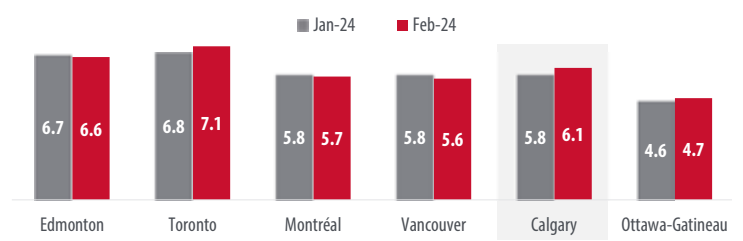
**Chart 1: CER Aggregate Labour Market Summary**

Year-Over-Year Comparisons (000's)



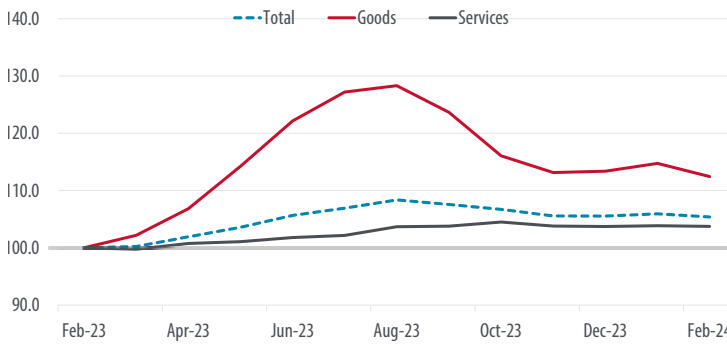
**Chart 2: Unemployment rates in Calgary and Toronto rose in February 2024 from the month before**

Seasonally-Adjusted Unemployment Rate Comparison Between Major CMA's In Canada (%)



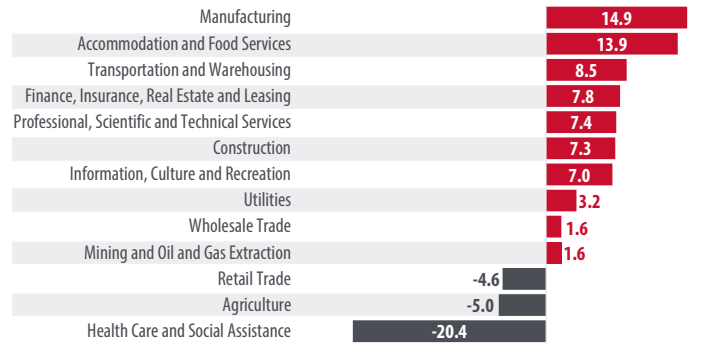
**Chart 3: The CER's goods sector has been a big driver in job growth**

CER Employment Indexed to February 2023



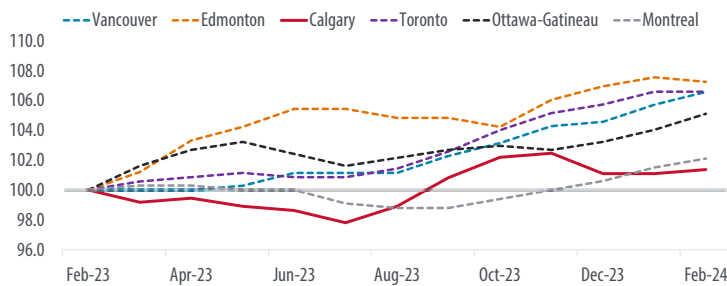
**Chart 4: Employment in Health Services have slowed down since last year**

Year-Over-Year Changes in CER Employment by Industry February 2024 (000's)

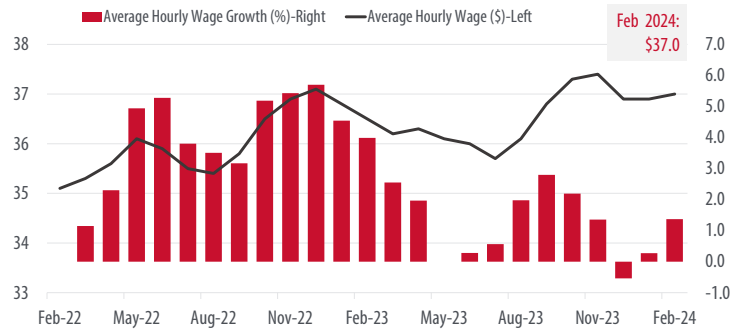


**Chart 5: Wage growth in Calgary remains low compared to other Canadian cities**

Average Hourly Wages by Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) Indexed to February 2023

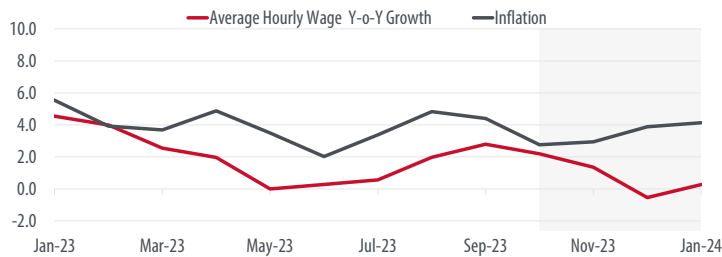


**Chart 6: Calgary CMA wages have seen slow growth this year**



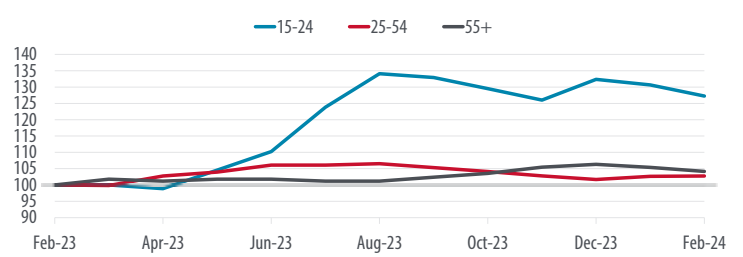
**Chart 7: Calgary's cost of living growth is still outpacing wage growth**

Inflation and Average Hourly Wage Y-o-Y Growth for the Calgary CMA (%)



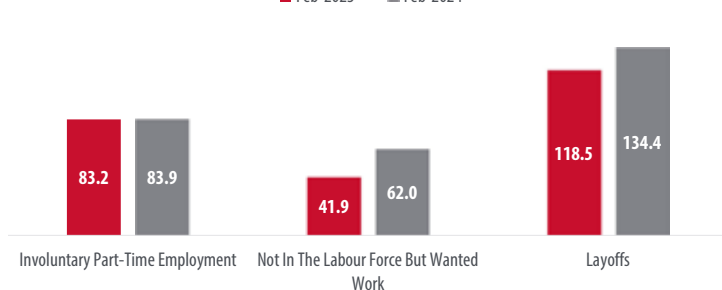
**Chart 8: Youth Employment is up compared to last year**

CER Employment by Age Cohort Indexed to February 2023



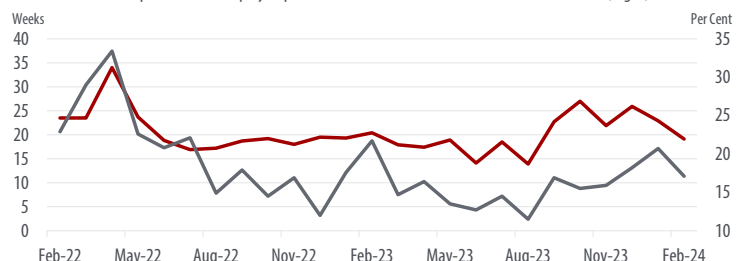
**Chart 9: Indicators of "Hidden Unemployment" and Layoff Trends (000's)**

Feb-2023 Feb-2024



**Chart 10: It is taking less time for unemployed people to find jobs across Alberta**

Average weeks unemployed-Alberta (Left)  
Proportion of unemployed persons without work for 27 weeks or more-Alberta (Right)



**Table 1. Labour Force Statistics**  
(Seasonally unadjusted 3-month-moving-average)

CALGARY ECONOMIC REGION	Description	Feb-24	Jan-24	Feb-23	Annual Change
	Working Age Population ('000)	1,483.9	1,477.9	1,412.2	71.7
Labour Force ('000)	1,028.1	1,026.6	979.8	48.3	
Labour Force Participation Rate (%)	69.3	69.5	69.4	(0.1)	
Employment ('000)	963.6	968.5	914.3	49.3	
Employment Rate (%)	64.9	65.5	64.7	0.2	
Unemployment ('000)	64.5	58.1	65.5	(1.0)	
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.3	5.7	6.7	(0.4)	

ALBERTA	Description	Feb-24	Jan-24	Feb-23	Annual Change
	Working Age Population ('000)	3,850.2	3,836.1	3,677.9	172.3
Labour Force ('000)	2,656.6	2,642.1	2,546.7	109.9	
Labour Force Participation Rate (%)	69.0	68.9	69.2	(0.2)	
Employment ('000)	2,485.0	2,479.4	2,392.6	92.4	
Employment Rate (%)	64.5	64.6	65.1	(0.6)	
Unemployment ('000)	171.6	162.7	154.0	17.6	
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.5	6.2	6.0	0.5	

Sources: Statistics Canada, Corporate Economics, March 8, 2024

**Table 2. Calgary CMA Wage by Industry**

Industry	Total employees*** ('000 people)			Average weekly earning (\$)			Total weekly wage bill (\$million)			Total hours worked (hours)		
	Feb-24	Feb-23	Change (y/y)	Feb-24	Feb-23	Change (y/y)	Feb-24	Feb-23	Change (y/y)	Feb-24	Feb-23	Change (y/y)
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	43.7	43.4	0.3	2,234.5	2,470.0	(235.5)	97.6	107.2	(9.6)	43.0	40.8	2.1
Utilities	9.7	7.5	2.2	2,274.1	2,298.0	(23.9)	22.1	17.2	4.8	39.4	39.6	(0.2)
Construction	56.5	57.2	(0.7)	1,765.1	1,533.4	231.7	99.7	87.7	12.0	40.7	39.8	0.8
Manufacturing	44.0	28.4	15.6	1,341.2	1,419.7	(78.5)	59.0	40.3	18.7	39.9	39.2	0.7
Wholesale Trade	26.8	28.5	(1.7)	1,605.3	1,533.2	72.1	43.0	43.7	(0.7)	41.0	39.7	1.2
Retail Trade	85.0	83.4	1.6	691.8	766.3	(74.5)	58.8	63.9	(5.1)	31.7	32.9	(1.2)
Transportation and Warehousing	58.0	51.6	6.4	1,327.1	1,321.2	5.9	77.0	68.2	8.8	38.5	39.4	(1.0)
Information and Cultural Industries	12.5	8.9	3.6	1,126.1	1,697.2	(571.1)	14.1	15.1	(1.0)	34.1	39.3	(5.2)
Finance and Insurance	39.3	28.2	11.1	1,845.4	1,659.9	185.5	72.5	46.8	25.7	38.9	38.3	0.6
Real Estate Rental and Leasing	10.9	19.1	(8.2)	1,355.5	1,269.4	86.1	14.8	24.2	(9.5)	36.6	40.4	(3.8)
Professional Scientific and Technical Services	100.6	78.7	21.9	2,052.1	1,804.0	248.1	206.4	142.0	64.5	38.9	38.5	0.5
Administrative and Support	28.8	19.5	9.3	1,022.6	1,009.6	13.0	29.5	19.7	9.8	36.8	35.5	1.2
Educational Services	54.8	57.0	(2.2)	1,242.2	1,351.8	(109.6)	68.1	77.1	(9.0)	32.3	34.4	(2.1)
Health Care and Social Assistance	85.9	103.1	(17.2)	1,153.6	1,161.7	(8.1)	99.1	119.8	(20.7)	34.6	34.7	(0.0)
Arts Entertainment and Recreation	22.0	18.0	4.0	612.0	759.7	(147.7)	13.5	13.7	(0.2)	25.1	31.8	(6.7)
Accommodation and Food Services	49.9	37.7	12.2	621.1	528.1	93.0	31.0	19.9	11.1	29.3	27.6	1.6
Other Services (except Public Admin)	31.8	25.2	6.6	1,013.3	1,045.0	(31.7)	32.2	26.3	5.9	36.8	36.5	0.3
Public Administration	25.6	29.6	(4.0)	1,734.9	1,782.5	(47.6)	44.4	52.8	(8.3)	36.6	37.8	(1.2)
<b>All Industries</b>	<b>786.7</b>	<b>727.0</b>	<b>59.7</b>	<b>1,377.3</b>	<b>1,358.4</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>1,083.5</b>	<b>987.6</b>	<b>96.0</b>	<b>37.2</b>	<b>37.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>

\*\*\* Excluding self-employed *Note: lack of data for Agriculture*  
Sources: Statistics Canada, Corporate Economics, March 8, 2024

Next update: April 5, 2024

For media inquiry, please contact:  
The Media Line at **403.828.2954** or [media.relations@calgary.ca](mailto:media.relations@calgary.ca)

For the technical questions, please contact:

**Stanley Kongnetiman**  
Manager, Corporate Economics and Regulatory Affairs  
[stanley.kongnetiman@calgary.ca](mailto:stanley.kongnetiman@calgary.ca)

**Paapa Essel**  
Corporate Economist  
[paapa.essel@calgary.ca](mailto:paapa.essel@calgary.ca)

**Mark Angelo Uy**  
Corporate Research Analyst  
[markangelo.uy@calgary.ca](mailto:markangelo.uy@calgary.ca)

**Estella Scruggs**  
Sr. Corporate Research Analyst  
[estella.scruggs@calgary.ca](mailto:estella.scruggs@calgary.ca)

Many of our publications are available on the internet at [www.calgary.ca/economy](http://www.calgary.ca/economy).

The City of Calgary provides this information in good faith. However, the aforementioned organization makes no representation, warranty or condition, statutory express or implied, takes no responsibility for any errors and omissions which may contained herein and accepts no liability for any loss arising from any use or reliance on this report.