

## **Regional Profile of Southern Alberta, Canada (Alberta Southwest, SouthGrow & Lethbridge Region)**

### **Region**

The Southernmost region of West & Central Alberta is a breathtaking piece of the Canadian landscape, with expansive prairies, majestic Rocky Mountains, picturesque rivers and valleys, often under clear blue skies as far as the eye can see. This region is located in the province of Alberta and sits on the doorstep of the Canadian Rocky Mountains and includes natural wonders such as the impressive Waterton Lakes National Park, and historic sites such as the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo-Jump site World Heritage Site and Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park.

Southern Alberta has a rich and exciting past. It was home to many indigenous people, a corridor of trading posts, a region patrolled by Royal Canadian Mounted Police housed in forts at key locations, a web of prairie settlements, and an economy driven by coal mining at the turn of the century. Coal mines dot the landscape throughout Alberta, as coal was the prime commodity from the 1880's until the 1960's, and it was this industry that drove significant investment into Alberta's rail infrastructure.

This region is home to 170,000 people, living in 34 safe, vibrant and neighbourly cities, communities and municipalities, in a land area of 38,270 square kilometres. Lethbridge is the central city and hub of the region with a population of 93,000. Surrounding towns include: Cardston, Claresholm, Coaldale, Coalhurst, Crowsnest Pass, Fort Macleod, Milk River, Nanton, Picture Butte, Pincher Creek, Raymond, Taber, Vauxhall, and Vulcan ranging in population from 800 to 8,100.

Located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy first nation's territory, the region includes land reserves of two of the confederacy's tribes – the Kainai (Blood) nation, and the Piikani (Peigan) nation. The Kainai reserve, with an area of more than 1,400 square kilometres, is the largest in Canada, with the Piikani reserve, at 430 square kilometers, being the fourth largest in Canada. The total population of both reserves is approximately 14,000 people, with social, economic, educational, and cultural ties between each other and the surrounding communities. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, a UNESCO World Heritage Site located near the Town of Fort Macleod, showcases many traditional aspects of Blackfoot culture and beliefs, including the central importance of the bison (buffalo) hunt in traditional Blackfoot life.

### **Climate**

The region has clean, fresh water, 320 days of sunshine per year, clear starry nights and a bounty of natural resources. Warm westerly Chinook winds reduce the severity and length of the winters and ease the many hot summer days. Relatively dry air provides a comfortable atmosphere for residents and visitors alike.

## People

The region has a young and growing population, particularly within the city of Lethbridge where the median age is 38 and the portion of the population ages 20-29 is higher than average, due to the two post-secondary institutions. The population is equally distributed between men and women, and on average grows about 2% per year. Residents enjoy a high standard of living and the average income per household is \$84,000 Canadian dollars per year.

Lethbridge is a culturally diverse city. As of 2011, there were 12,420 immigrants living in Lethbridge, an increase of 13% since 2006. The largest sub-groups of immigrants are from the United Kingdom, Netherlands, United States, Mexico and Germany. Lethbridge is also home to the largest population of Bhutanese refugees and immigrants in Canada. English is the predominant language spoken in this region, followed by French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Filipino and Chinese.

## Education

This region is home to a well-educated population, with more than 60% of the population benefiting from a post-secondary education. The region is committed to quality education from pre-school and kindergarten through to our college and university. Within the Alberta public-school and Catholic-school systems, there are more than 40 elementary schools (primary), junior high schools (pre-secondary), high schools (secondary) and integrated occupational schools (secondary).

There are multiple centres providing world-class research and development. At the **University of Lethbridge** researchers are performing ground-breaking work in the field of science, **Lethbridge College** is training youth in state of the art techniques to deal with today's age of technology and environmentalism and **Lethbridge Research Centre** is expanding our agricultural abilities at one of Canada's largest Agriculture and Agri-food research facilities. The University of Lethbridge is also home to **nine research centres and institutes** that bring leading researchers together from across disciplines to address issues that affect our world and beyond.

## Transportation Corridor

The geographic location benefits from an excellent continental transportation system. Road, rail, air and logistics offer a range of options and in some cases provides a competitive advantage to regional businesses, while ensuring the consistent ability to collaborate within the region. The well maintained transportation corridors and temperate climate means excellent movement of people and goods 24/7/365. Road, rail and air transportation provides a wide range of options ensuring safety, affordability and efficiency.

Businesses benefit from proximity to major markets as there are more than 5.5 million people that can be accessed from the region within a day’s drive, and over 50 million through overnight delivery. The region is strategically located on the North South International Trade Corridor (CANAMEX Highway) and is close to the United States border. The region has Alberta’s only 24 hour Port of Entry at the Coutts/Sweetgrass Border Crossing.

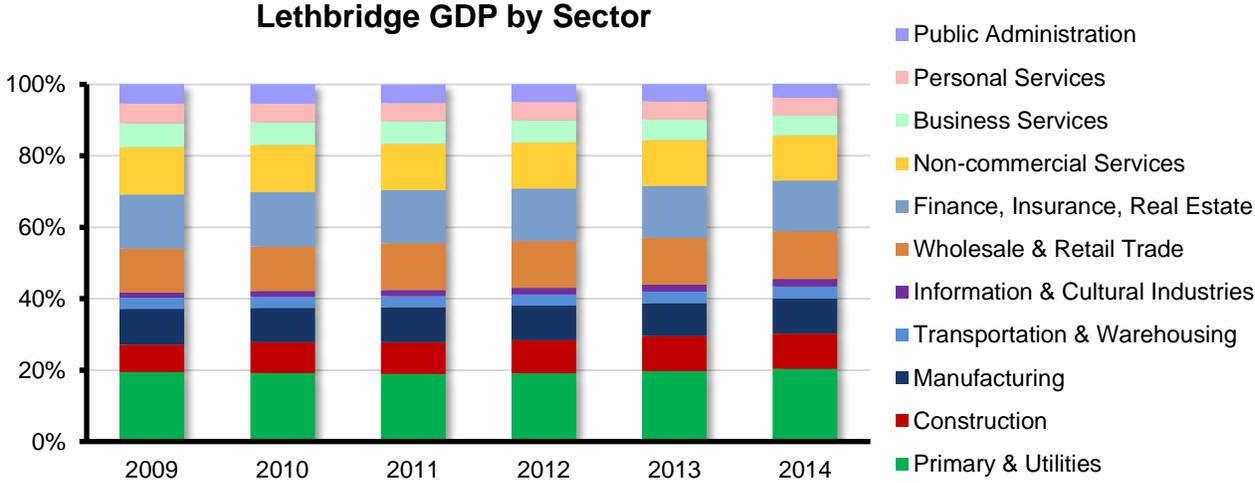
**Economy**

Southern Alberta benefits from a strong and vibrant economy, supported by a diversified economic base built on a healthy mix of businesses anchored in our communities. The industry diversity fosters a healthy business environment and creates potential for future enhancement and development opportunities.

Year	Lethbridge GDP, CND \$	GDP % Change
2014	\$ 4,998,000,000	1.2%
2015 (f)	\$ 5,052,000,000	1.1%
2016 (f)	\$ 5,136,000,000	1.7%

Source: Conference Board of Canada, Mid-Sized Cities Outlook, 2015

The Lethbridge region has a gross domestic product valued at close to \$5 billion a year and this continues to grow. The largest industry contributors to the economy are agricultural, followed by manufacturing and processing, then wholesale and retail trade. This is supported by strong business service and commercial sectors, and a thriving construction sector.



Source: Conference Board of Canada, Mid-Sized Cities Outlook, 2015

There are more than 10,000 businesses in this region in addition to 4,470 farms encompassing a land area of 4.2 million acres. Farm revenues are \$3.11 billion per year, the highest of all areas in Alberta. The on-farm livestock and poultry are valued at \$885 million, with 1,060,830 cattle and calves reported. Cropland totals 3.7 million acres and this area is the largest producers of durum wheat, fodder corn, potatoes, flaxseed, dry beans, sugar beets and vegetables (such as sweet corn and green peas) in Alberta.

Alberta has a pro-business attitude with one of the lowest tax environments in North America. In fact, communities and municipalities within this region have some of the lowest tax rates within the province of Alberta, which already has some of the lowest tax rates within Canada. The healthy business environment is supported by very competitive tax rates and low costs of doing business.

**International Tax Cost Comparison**

Location	Average per Operation (\$US'000)	Property Tax	Total Taxes	Rank
<b>Lethbridge</b>	<b>\$ 99</b>	<b>\$ 586</b>	<b>1</b>	
Canada	\$ 188	\$ 593	2	
Netherlands	\$ 11	\$ 1,609	3	
Australia	\$ 33	\$ 692	4	
United Kingdom	\$ 267	\$ 740	5	
Germany	\$ 144	\$ 807	6	
France	\$ 51	\$ 814	7	
Italy	\$ 56	\$ 869	8	
United States	\$ 243	\$ 1,152	9	
Japan	\$ 370	\$ 1,365	10	

Source: *Competitive Alternatives: KPMG's Guide to International Business Location, 2014 Edition.*

## Key Industries

Southern Alberta offers a diverse range of industry operating across a variety of sectors. The largest industry and economic driver is agricultural production. This is followed by agri-food processing, manufacturing, alternative energy/renewable energy and tourism. These industries are supported by a strong construction and commercial services sector, in an area that builds on both the public and private sector economy in one of Canada's strongest provinces.



### **Agriculture, Agri-Food & Bio-Products**

Crops produced in the region include:

- Spring & Durum Wheat
- Canola
- Barley
- Forage crops (such as alfalfa)
- Sugar Beets
- Potatoes
- Corn
- Pulse Crops (such as beans, peas and lentils)
- Honey

Livestock is also a key agricultural product, with the mainstays of beef, pork, and poultry in addition to eggs, cheese and milk, that contribute significantly to Canada's and the world's protein supply.

A large portion of these crops are also processed in the region, and global producers such as Richardson Oilseed, McCains, Cavendish, PepsiCo Foods, Lucerne Foods, Sunrise Poultry, Sunnyrose Cheese, Maple Leaf Meats, and Parmalat are distributing their high quality Canadian food products around the world.

The biochemical/biomaterial industry is an emerging sector which is developing bio-based chemicals and materials from hemp, corn, canola, sugar beets and other Alberta crops. This is a sub-sector of the chemical manufacturing industry, which generates \$2 trillion in annual revenue.



### **Alternative, Renewable and Bio-Energy**

The region has invested in renewable energy sources including:

- Wind
- Solar
- Bio-Energy
- Bio-Fuels

Considered to be the birthplace of Canada's wind industry, the first commercial wind farm was built in Southwest Alberta in 1993. Presently there are 532 turbines generating 1,086 megawatts of energy capacity, with another \$1.2 billion in wind energy projects planned or proposed in the region that will potentially double capacity over the next several years.

Receiving 2,300 hours of sunshine on average per year offers an advantageous location for the solar industry in Canada. Alberta has the potential to be a world leader in the supply of solar energy.

There are two bio-digesters in the area and combined they produce more than 4.2 megawatts of energy per year by converting plant and animal waste to energy. Home to the largest biodiesel plant in Canada, this facility can produce 66 million litres of biofuel a year.



## **Manufacturing**

Manufacturing and distribution have a solid foundation in Southern Alberta, much of it in support of agriculture and agri-food. Heavy manufacturing is also a significant industry, not only in terms of job creation and employment, but also in the economic impact it has on the region.

Overall manufacturing contributes more than \$633,000,000 to the local GDP each year. From specialized trailers to aircraft engines, this area is home to a range of small to medium sized manufacturers. Manufacturing sub-sectors include:

- Agricultural Equipment
- Aircraft Engines
- Metal Foundry (casting & fabricating)
- Metal Fabrication
- Modular housing
- Oil & Gas Equipment
- Plastic Products
- Transportation Equipment
- Waste & Recycling Systems

Oil and gas equipment, and home manufacturers benefit from cost-effective manufacturing of products and supplies. Automation, robotics, lean manufacturing and Kaizen practices contribute to the continued success of these businesses and the highly diversified local economy.



## Tourism

The tourism industry in Southern Alberta is vibrant and growing with a breadth of travel and tourism opportunities including:

- Cultural & Natural destinations
  - Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park
  - Buffalo Rock Tipi Camp
  - Devil's Coulee Dinosaur & Heritage Museum
  - Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump World Heritage Site
  - Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park
  - Windy Rafter's Barn Dance
  - Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park
- Historical
  - Empress Theatre
  - Fort Museum of NWMP and First Nations Interpretive Centre
  - Fort Whoop-Up National Historic Site
  - Frank Slide Interpretive Centre
  - Galt Museum & Archives
  - Leitch Collieries
  - Remington Carriage Museum
- Recreation & Outdoor Adventure
  - Canoeing & Kayaking
  - Climbing & Hiking
  - Curling
  - Cycling
  - Fishing
  - Golf
  - Paintball
  - Skating & Skiing
  - Trail Riding on horseback
  - White Water Rafting
- Entertainment
  - Concerts
  - Festivals
  - Live Music
  - Performing Arts
  - Symphony
  - Theatre

From the prairies to the Rockies, enjoy hiking, snowmobiling, blue-ribbon fly fishing, trail riding, golfing, authentic Native experiences, museums and historic sites, and backcountry spots not on the map.

Thank you for your interest in our region. For more information please contact one of the following organizations:



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