



News Release

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Edmonton's top-10 economic news stories of 2007

—EEDC anticipates bright economic future for Edmonton in 2008

The once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to participate in a sustained period of growth is this year's No. 1 economic news story for 2007 as compiled annually by Edmonton Economic Development Corp. Here is EEDC's complete top-10 list:

1. **Opportunity of a lifetime**

The year 2007 has been the economic opportunity of a lifetime for businesses and residents of Greater Edmonton. We enjoy Canada's No. 1 performing economy according to CIBC World Markets. Unemployment is the lowest in almost four decades. Personal income growth continues to outpace the national average and is accelerating. About 1,000 people move to our region each month. And global interest in the oilsands, combined with near-record prices for oil, is transforming Alberta into an energy superpower ... with Edmonton as its industrial powerhouse.

2. **World-beating performance**

Edmonton's emergence as an industrial powerhouse is fuelled by capital investments planned for our region possibly worth hundreds of billions of dollars over the next few decades. As 2007 draws to a close, Edmonton is no longer Canada's best-kept secret. The Edmonton-Calgary Corridor, with 2.3 million residents, is now widely perceived to be a "Prairie Tiger" that would be the world's best-performing economy if it stood alone. Edmonton was rated by *Foreign Direct Investment* magazine as having the best economic potential of a large city in North America in 2007. And after more than a decade of uninterrupted growth, Edmonton's GDP is projected to keep growing at more than four per cent for the next three years.

3. **Region adds value to oilsands**

When the Alberta government announced its new royalty regime for oil, gas and the oilsands in October, it contained incentives for more upgrading and refining of bitumen to take place in Alberta. That policy is very likely to increase the already substantial investment committed to bitumen upgraders in Greater Edmonton. As recently as August, the value of upgrader projects in the region was estimated between \$18.8 billion and \$32.9 billion. By November, there were regional projects valued at \$63 billion. Experts now estimate potential development between now and 2030 could reach \$124 billion.

4. **Competition for labour heats up**

The availability of labour is critical to Edmonton's future. The provincial economy is expected to create 400,000 new jobs in Alberta in the next eight years, but only 300,000 new workers are expected to enter the labour force. To address this shortfall, smart employers are embarking on programs to retain existing workers and help them upgrade their skills. They are drawing on groups such as Aboriginal Canadians who have been under-employed in the

Competition for international talent will be tough, as all industrialized nations expect labour shortages in the next 50 years as their populations age or decline. Migrants will be in a position to be picky about where they live, and they will choose cities that are clean and safe, with great health care and education, and an excellent quality of life. Workers want good homes in livable cities that are easy to get around, with abundant choices for entertainment, culture, sports and recreation. Edmonton is committed to transforming itself into one of the world's great mid-size cities.

5. **Real estate market rebalances**

Following a year of soaring prices, Edmonton's real estate market cooled down a notch. A frenzied seller's market of 2006 became a buyer's market in the second half of 2007. Average MLS prices in October 2007 were \$347,668 for all homes and \$397,189 (still up markedly from \$326,292 a year earlier) for single-family dwellings. There were 10,060 housing starts in Edmonton in the first eight months of 2007, compared with 9,979 in Calgary. When measured against income, homes in Greater Edmonton remain more affordable than those in Calgary, Toronto or Vancouver.

6. **Investment in health care pays off**

Residents of Greater Edmonton are starting to benefit from a surge of investment in health care and research in recent years. The Alberta Diabetes Institute, the largest research centre of its kind in Canada (200 researchers), opened in November 2007. The Mazankowski Alberta Health Institute, a 124-bed centre for research, training and patient care at the U of A, is on track to open in 2008. The Lois Hole Hospital for Women is scheduled to open the following year at the Royal Alexandra Hospital. Ground was broken in October at the U of A for the \$909-million Edmonton Clinic, a state-of-the-art medical treatment and learning facility. Capital Health also broke ground in October for the Strathcona County Community Hospital, a 108-bed acute care hospital.

7. **Continued growth of major post-secondary institutions**

Edmonton's educational institutions celebrated a number of milestones in 2007. Grant MacEwan College saw the September opening of the Robbins Health Learning Centre, which will provide space for 2,000 new students and continuing education for Alberta's 25,000 nurses. The Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Canada's premier technical college serving 72,000 students each year, announced its first four-year degree program in November — a Bachelor of Business Administration in Enterprise Management (BBA). And the University of Alberta, which will celebrate its 100th birthday in 2008, saw another large project begin to rise on campus with construction of the \$319-million Centennial Centre for Interdisciplinary Science.

8. **Capacity grows in travel and transportation**

October's opening of the southeastern section of the Anthony Henday (Hwy. 216) ring road was one highlight of a banner year in regional transportation. The opening of the Prince Rupert container port was a historic milestone in the evolution of Edmonton to Port Alberta — an intercontinental and inter-modal transportation hub on the model of Chicago or Memphis. Edmonton International Airport, Canada's fastest-growing major airport, is on track to serve more than six million passengers in 2007, up from four million in 2003-04. With passenger traffic expected to grow another 50 per cent by 2012, the airport is

gates south of the current U.S. departures area. Edmonton's Light Rail Transit continues to grow; new stations at 76th Avenue and the U of A South Campus are due to open in early 2009, with travel to Southgate and Century Park Station at 23rd Avenue to follow a year later. And the province of Alberta will soon consider a proposal to build Canada's first high-speed train system between Edmonton and Calgary.

9. Canada's cultural capital ... and sports showcase

The city's dynamic arts and cultural scene received national recognition with Edmonton being designated Canada's Cultural Capital for 2007. It also was banner year on the festival scene — and 2008 promises to be even better with a remarkable 37 festivals being planned. Sports fans also had much to cheer: Lorena Ochoa won the Canadian Women's Open at Mayfair golf course; Sebastien Bourdais won the Rexall Grand Prix of Edmonton; and junior hockey returned to the city with the Edmonton Oil Kings joining the WHL.

10. Embracing the future

Edmonton embraced its future with more gusto in 2007 than at any time in recent history. For example, the Envision Edmonton project is helping business and political leaders come together to create a new 30-year vision for a great mid-size global city. A targeted advertising campaign in key national markets will showcase the new Edmonton. And the just-opened Wheaton Family YMCA, the refurbished Enterprise Square, significant new retail space, a dozen high-rise condo projects and a spectacular new vision for the Art Gallery of Alberta all herald the successful revival of downtown.

This momentum is also carrying forward into the new Quarters (Downtown East) redevelopment plan that may include some of the country's most environmentally friendly new housing. A new arena for the Edmonton Oilers and a new bridge connecting downtown to the south side are both under consideration. And there's even talk of Edmonton making a bid next year to host a World's Fair in 2017, which will be Canada's 150th birthday and the 50th anniversary of Expo 67.

If developments in 2007 are any indication, 2008 will be extremely positive for Edmonton's economic future and growing national / international profile.

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