

## Edmonton's employment edges lower in March

April 6, 2018

Employment in the **Edmonton** Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) fell by approximately 2,200 positions in March 2018. The losses were in full-time positions, as modest employment gains in the financial services, professional services, manufacturing and education sectors were more than offset by job losses in construction, logistics, and retail and wholesale trade.

In spite of these job losses, Edmonton's unemployment rate fell from 6.9% in February to 6.7% in March as the number of individuals in the active labour force also fell. The unemployment rate for the **Calgary CMA** moved up from 7.9% in February to 8.2% in March 2018, as employment fell modestly while the active labour force grew.

**Labour Force Survey Results—Edmonton CMA<sup>1</sup>**  
**Three-month moving average—seasonally adjusted**

	Mar 2017	Feb 2018	<b>Mar 2018</b>	Feb 2018 to Mar 2018	Mar 2017 to Mar 2018	Feb 2018 to Mar 2018	Mar 2017 to Mar 2018
	(000)	(000)	<b>(000)</b>	(000)	(000)	%	%
Population (15 years and older)	1131.1	1149.1	<b>1150.8</b>	1.7	19.7	0.2	1.7
Labour force	827.6	820.8	<b>816.6</b>	-4.2	-11.0	-0.5	-1.3
Employment	757.4	764.0	<b>761.8</b>	-2.2	4.4	-0.3	0.6
Unemployment	70.2	56.8	<b>54.8</b>	-2.0	-15.4	-3.5	-21.9
Unemployment rate (%)	8.5	6.9	<b>6.7</b>	-0.2	-1.8	...	...
Participation rate (%)	73.2	71.4	<b>71.0</b>	-0.4	-2.2	...	...
Employment rate (%)	67.0	66.5	<b>66.2</b>	-0.3	-0.8	...	...

Source: Statistics Canada

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada released revised employment data in January 2018. Consequently the historical data in this table will vary from those reported in past months.

Employment in **Alberta** was up slightly in March 2018 with a gain of about 8,300 jobs. This was the result of an increase in part-time employment. The number of full-time jobs was unchanged.

The number of people seeking work in Alberta fell in March. This, combined with the modest employment gains, caused the unemployment rate for the province to fall from 6.7% in February to 6.3% in March 2018.

In March, **Canada's** overall employment saw a solid gain of 32,000 positions. This gain was driven by a large increase in full-time employment. Job gains were concentrated in construction and public administration. In spite of the employment gains in March 2018, Canada's unemployment rate was unchanged at 5.8%, as the number of individuals seeking work grew at about the same rate as employment.

### **Significance**

The Edmonton region's job gains in 2017 demonstrated that the region has begun a recovery from the downturn in 2016. Despite the month-over-month decrease in March 2018, very strong gains in the Edmonton region's full-time employment since January 2017 suggest employers are now more confident about adding to their workforce.

As well, with the past year's employment growth concentrated in full-time positions, average weekly wages grew 5.5% year-over-year in March 2018. Consequently, workers are seeing very good gains in their income, which will help to boost consumer spending going forward.

In the first half of 2018, employment in Edmonton should see growth in the manufacturing, professional services and financial services sectors. However, the unemployment rate is unlikely to move much lower than the 6.7% seen in March as individuals, discouraged by less favourable employment conditions in the first quarter of 2018, return to the active labour force.

Growth in the working-age population, up by 1.7% from March 2017 to March 2018, will be a key factor in addressing labour and skill shortages that may emerge in Edmonton as the local economy continues to recover and the labour market tightens. However, with Edmonton's unemployment rate still well above the national average, net migration to the region has slowed down (especially when compared to the volumes seen from 2010 to 2014), which will slow the growth in the working-age population over the remainder of 2018.

### **Limitations**

Employment trends, particularly in the full-time category, tend to lag behind developments in overall economic activity. Because of this, they are a better indicator of past, rather than current, conditions in the economy. However, employment trends are still useful predictors of future changes in incomes and consumer spending. Statistics Canada publishes a three-month moving average of all labour force values for the Edmonton region, an approach that sometimes results in the number of reported jobs lagging behind developments in the Edmonton region's economy.

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