

Calgary's downtown core

Provincial support at a glance

Calgary's downtown has long been a symbol of a healthy and vibrant Alberta. However, following the global collapse of energy prices, the worst economic downturn in almost a century, and the COVID-19 pandemic, Calgary's office vacancy rate rose to more than 32 per cent.

[The Calgary Office Revitalization and Expansion \(CORE\) Working Group](#) was established in May 2021 to provide suggested actions for government to consider to help revitalize downtown Calgary as a healthy and energetic area to work and live. Alberta's government has received the working group's report and is reviewing their recommendations.

The working group's suggested actions complement and build on other actions Alberta's government has already set in motion to support the City of Calgary's downtown core through Alberta's Recovery Plan and Budget 2022.

Provincial support at a glance

In addition to forming the CORE Working Group, the Government of Alberta has introduced a number of programs, initiatives and supports over the past few years that will contribute to the recovery and revitalization of Calgary's downtown core.

Alberta's Recovery Plan

In June 2020, the Minister launched Alberta's Recovery Plan to grow, diversify, and strengthen Alberta's economy through five key pillars:

- 1) **Strengthening Alberta's Workforce** – making sure workers and businesses have what they need to succeed in the future.
- 2) **Growing Alberta's Resources** – continuing to invest in oil and gas, forestry, agriculture, and tourism.
- 3) **Building for the Future** – creating jobs by building the roads, schools, and hospitals Alberta will need in the years to come.
- 4) **Helping Everyday Albertans** – providing support and benefits for individuals, families, and small businesses after the pandemic.
- 5) **Diversifying Alberta's Economy** – attracting new investment in emerging sectors like finance and fintech, film and television production, and technology and innovation to create jobs for the future.

Programs and supports

Under Alberta's Recovery Plan, the Government of Alberta has introduced hundreds of supports for everyday Albertans and incentives for new businesses and created a strong policy environment to attract new investment and activity to the province.

Alberta government initiatives that have had, or will have, the strongest impact on the City of Calgary's economic activity, specifically in the downtown core include:

- Over \$615 million in funding was provided to small businesses through the Small and Medium Enterprise Relaunch Grant
- Creation of the Investment and Growth Strategy, a \$75 million investment designed to attract investors to Alberta, making Alberta more competitive and accelerating economic diversification in the province.
- \$50 million in Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction funding delivered by Alberta Innovates to support clean technology and energy projects that accelerate innovation, support long-term competitiveness, and stimulate economic growth.
- Recapitalization of the Alberta Enterprise Corporation with \$175 million in funding to support the strength and ensure the competitiveness of Alberta's innovation ecosystems and technology sector.
- Creation of the Alberta Jobs Now program to provide up to \$370 million for private and non-profit businesses to hire and train unemployed Albertans.
- Over \$10 million in funding for Women Building Futures, a training initiative to support women entering into high-demand careers.
- Creation of the Innovation Employment Grant to encourage investments in technology in Alberta.
- The GreenSTEM Pilot Project collaboration with the Government of Alberta and the universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge. This program provides funding and support for technology start-ups and high-technology

entrepreneurial development. To date, the program has supported the establishment of 19 new technology companies, including nine in Calgary, creating 113 jobs across the province, registering 36 new patents, and generating over \$2.2 million in revenue.

- Appointment of a Parliamentary Secretary to assist the Minister of Community and Social Services and work with the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to integrate homeless outreach and mental health services, support the addictions recovery strategy, align funding initiatives from all levels of government, and prepare recommendations for the future.
- Creation of the Cultural Event Relaunch Program to offer support for music and performing arts events.
- Establishment of Alberta Biz Connect to offer guidance for businesses and non-profit organizations most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic to operate safely and support recovery.
- Promotion of Alberta as a destination for investment through the Invest Alberta Corporation.

Infrastructure investments

In addition to programs and supports, the Government of Alberta has also made significant investments in the following infrastructure projects to support the growth of the City of Calgary:

- \$6.2 million towards the \$21.1 million downtown Calgary flood barrier, which will run along the south bank of the Bow River on the Eau Claire Promenade and Riverwalk. This infrastructure will protect Calgary's downtown community against significant flooding events, such as the 2013 flood of the Elbow and Bow rivers.
- \$15 million towards a \$60 million expansion project of Vivo, north-central Calgary's Centre for Community Well-Being, Sport and Recreation.
- \$6 million towards a \$15 million YWCA Calgary Hub Facility project for women and their families to provide transitional housing, counselling, language and employment skill training, child development, and parenting programming.
- \$64 million over the next three years for the Court of Appeal in Calgary for renovations.
- \$1.5 billion towards the \$4.65 billion Calgary Green Line LRT Project, representing the largest infrastructure investment in Calgary's history. In Stage 1, the LRT Project will create 20,000 jobs to construct a 46 km track to connect Calgarians in the north and south ends of the City.
 - An additional \$148 million to support Calgary through the Green Transit Incentives Program for Green Line early works involving utility relocation and land acquisition.

- \$14.7 million towards a \$36.85 million Calgary – Upper Plateau Separation Project to help reduce flood risk complications caused by stormwater flow in the communities of Hillhurst/Sunnyside.
- Funding was provided in Budget 2022 for Calgary's Repsol Sport Centre to upgrade the aquatics facilities to meet international event hosting standards. The Repsol Sports Centre will receive \$5 million in 2022-23, \$9 million in 2023-24, and \$6 million in 2024-25.
- The province is committing to spending \$5 million on the Calgary Stampede Foundation SAM Centre over the next two years, which will allow people to "interact with the history and culture of the Stampede and southern Alberta."
- Budget calls for the Calgary Zoo's "Canadian Wilds Redevelopment" project to receive \$11 million in provincial funding over the next two years.
- Additionally, \$80 million will be provided over the next three years to the historic Glenbow Centre Building, one of Alberta's premier cultural institutions. This renovation project will create approximately 650 jobs in Calgary.

Diversifying the economy

A key aspect of Alberta's Recovery Plan is economic diversification across the province.

To that end, Alberta's government has prioritized attracting new industries to the province, including a significant push to grow Alberta's technology and innovation sector.

This industry has a significant impact on downtown Calgary and has begun to build a strong ecosystem that will have a presence in the City Centre for decades to come.

Recently, Alberta's government has made several investments to help bolster Calgary's potential in this emerging industry, including:

- Funding for four accelerators across the province, including 500 Global, Plug n' Play, the Alberta Pre-Accelerator, and the Community Safety and Wellness Accelerator. These exciting platforms form a critical aspect of the Alberta Scaleup and Growth Accelerator Program led by Alberta Innovates. The consortium tasked to run this program has been allocated \$35 million over three years to retain accelerators in the City, which will complement the Government of Alberta's goal to create 20,000 new jobs in the sector and see Alberta's technology companies generate \$5 billion more in annual revenue by 2030 under its recently released Alberta Technology and Innovation Strategy.
- \$5 million in funding for Northern RNA to support the establishment of an RNA ecosystem in Alberta. Northern RNA, based in Calgary, is a contract development and manufacturing organization for pharmaceuticals. The funding, contingent on the company receiving financial

support from the federal government or private funding, will support the development of Alberta's pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity and the growth of the pharmaceutical and life science sector.

- \$73 million in new funding over three years for the Alberta Technology and Innovation Strategy. This funding will support actions under the strategy by helping to attract, retain and develop talent as well as provide significant investments in areas like artificial intelligence and quantum science.

Calgary has also been a big draw for private-sector technology companies with several investments taking center stage over the past year:

- Amazon Web Services Inc. announced it will make a multibillion-dollar investment on a new cloud computing operation in Calgary. It is estimated that this investment will create close to 1,000 jobs through a total investment of \$4.3 billion, making it perhaps the largest single investment in the history of the province's tech sector.
- Canada's largest commercial vertical farming company, GoodLeaf Farms, has begun work on a 74,000 square foot indoor farm in Calgary, after receiving a \$2.73 million incentive to locate to Alberta from the Investment and Growth Fund. The company will create 50 jobs during construction and 70 permanent jobs upon startup.
- Founded in 2016 and based in Calgary, Kent Imaging develops oxygen imaging technology for limb preservation and surgical care. In 2021, Kent Imaging received an investment of \$18.9 million from TVM Capital Life Science to accelerate the global commercialization of its industry-leading SnapshotNIR® product. This achievement will help boost the reputation of Alberta in the technology and innovation sector and contribute to the advancement of Alberta's life sciences sector.
- Founded in 2019 and with an office in Calgary, Holmetrics provides people analytics for human resource teams to provide insights into an organization's mental health and safety. In 2021, Holmetrics received \$173,400 in pre-seed investment from Pi Labs and was accepted into its accelerator program. This achievement will help to advance the commercialization of innovations, a key initiative under the Alberta Technology and Innovation Strategy, and contribute to the advancement of Alberta's life sciences sector.

Downtown revitalization funding

Through Budget 2022, Alberta's government has provided \$5 million to the City of Calgary and its downtown business association to work on revitalizing the downtown core.