

# Alberta had highest 1998 employment growth

BY RAEHEL CARPENTER

EDMONTON (CUP) — University graduates and other people set on looking for work in Alberta can rest easy.

The province had the highest employment growth in Canada last year and employment reached an all-time high with 1,514,000 Albertans working, new statistics show.

The unemployment rate dropped to 5.7 per cent in 1998 as, for the sixth year in a row, the province saw employment grow.

The provincial figures also

indicate that employment, which increased by 3.9 per cent, grew more than the Alberta's population which clocked in at 2.7 per cent.

The employment rate, which measures the proportion of

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working-age Albertans, increased to 68 per cent. Not only is this the highest recorded level since 1981, it is the highest among all the provinces for 1998.

The figures also included good news for young people in the province. While youth unemployment is still high across Canada, the numbers in Alberta are better than the average.

In 1998, employment among 16-to-24 year-olds increased by 16,000 people, up 6.7 per cent from a year ago. Specifically, the 20-to-24 year-old age group saw a gain

of 5 per cent, or 7300 new jobs.

The growth should benefit students, says T Parker Hogan, speaking on behalf of both the province and the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development.

"What we've seen is that employment growth has been steadily increasing over the last six years, and so I guess that bodes well for students in terms of trends," he said.

"When they graduate and look for jobs, there [should be] jobs out there. More importantly, they are full-time jobs."

Hogan attributes the province's impressive growth rate in part to business-friendly policies introduced by Alberta's Progressive Conservative government.

And while it's hard to predict what the future will hold, he says all indications are that employment will continue to grow in the province.

"The Conference Board of Canada, the major banks, all of the major economic prognosticators... see Alberta leading the country in growth, and we expect that to continue," he continued.

## Toronto students hit by major snowstorms

*Meanwhile, the sun could not shine brighter on Halifax*

BY DEREK CHEZZI AND ANGELA PACIENZA

TORONTO (CUP) — It was no ice storm, but the heavy snowfalls that have been hitting southern Ontario since the new year was rung in are making the history books.

Since Jan. 2, at least 110 centimetres of snow have been dumped on the city of Toronto, wrecking traffic havoc and causing commuter delays and closures across Canada's largest urban centre.

The past two weeks have seen more snow in Toronto than in all of 1998, with more precipitation expected next week. The last time the city was graced with so much snow was during "The Little Ice Age" of 1871, when 111 cm blanketed the city.

Toronto's downtown core was a virtual ghost town on Friday after weather reports and warnings by city officials kept everyone indoors.

The severe weather also crippled the city's public transportation system. Subways did not operate for much of Thursday and Friday, and buses were overloaded as people scrambled to make their way home.

More than 400 soldiers arrived in the city Wednesday after Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman

requested help from the federal government.

The troops assisted emergency vehicles, such as ambulances and fire trucks, in their response to calls and could be seen digging out fire hydrants and other areas of the city.

Students were among those told to stay home during the bad weather. Universities and colleges across the city began closing Thursday morning in anticipation of yet another snowfall on Friday, which dumped another 25 cm onto an already street-congesting 85 cm.

The University of Toronto and Ryerson and York universities, as well as nearly all colleges including Sheridan and George Brown, closed their doors again Friday. Classes and exams were cancelled and libraries and administrative offices were out of commission.

But while commuters and business owners bemoaned the lost business and hassles caused by the snowfalls, most students seemed to take the news of the school closures in stride.

Rima Ramchandani, a first-year University of Toronto law student, said she appreciated the unexpected day off.

"It worked out great, because I didn't have school this morning so I didn't go in," she said Thursday.

For Namrata Kanchan, a first-

year student at York, the record-breaking snowfall was her first experience with the harsh side of the Canadian winter.

An international student from India, Kanchan had never before seen the white stuff.

"I wasn't expecting this much, but I like it," she said.

Other students weren't as lucky, trekking all the way to school only to find their campus deserted.

"I was ticked off that I went all the way down there," said third-year Ryerson journalism student Sarah Denham, adding there was no advance warning that her classes would be cancelled.

Most universities and colleges however, have set up storm hotline numbers to keep students informed.

Some students thought schools should have been more prepared.

"They knew the whole La Niña thing was going to happen anyway; they should have been more prepared and got more plows," said York student Julie Huggins of the university's response to the weather emergency.

The first-year biology student missed a test and a science lab because of the closure and is worried about when she can make up the time.

But York student union president Dawn Palin says closing the university was a wise decision.

"York has a large number of commuter students, so its dangerous for them to get in," she said, adding that because the weather is making it impossible for some to reach the university at all, cancelling classes and exams ensures all students are treated equally.

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