CALGARY DATA DESK

Calgary: a hub of innovation, leadership and future growth

Sample report · Invest in Calgary · Calgary Data Desk

November 6, 2026

QUESTION

How can a new business leverage Calgary's infrastructure, ease of doing business and resources, and how does Calgary compare with other Canadian cities?

Key findings

1. Calgary has about 1,598,075 people and its metro grew 2.9% in the year to July 2025, among Canada's fastest; Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal grew 0.5% or less.
2. Alberta has Canada's lowest corporate tax (8% provincial, 23% combined), no sales tax, no payroll tax and no health premiums: an advantage Invest Alberta puts at $16.9 billion in 2026-27.
3. Calgary is Canada's fastest-growing startup ecosystem: top 50 emerging worldwide, $7 billion in value (July 2023 to December 2025), $3.4 billion of venture capital since 2021, and a tech workforce up 61% in three years.
4. Infrastructure is in place: YYC (19.4 million passengers in 2025), CPKC's headquarters and continental rail, major highways and a large supply of downtown office space at competitive terms.
5. The fastest-growing suburbs have far fewer local businesses per resident than the city's 6.1 per 1,000: the clearest openings for retail, health, child care and food.
6. Calgary is safer than the Canadian average (Crime Severity Index 62.94 against 75.01) and far more affordable than Toronto or Vancouver; energy cycles, office vacancy and housing cooling are the main risks.

1 Calgary at a glance

Calgary is Canada's third-largest city and the business centre of Alberta: about **1,598,075 people** in November 2026 (City of Calgary estimate), up about 309,080 since the 2021 Census. Its metropolitan area grew **2.9% in the year to July 2025**, among the fastest of Canada's 41 metropolitan areas, while Toronto's held flat and Vancouver's grew 0.2%.

It pairs the country's lowest business taxes with a young, educated workforce, a major international airport and the head offices of much of Canada's energy industry, and it is turning that base into a fast-growing technology and innovation economy. This report sets out, with sources, what a new investor can use: the infrastructure already in place, the ease of doing business, the resources available, how Calgary compares, and the risks to weigh.

Key figures

Measure	Calgary	Source
Population (city, November 2026)	1,598,075	City of Calgary, Economic Outlook 2026
Metro population growth, 2024-25	+2.9%	Statistics Canada
Combined corporate income tax	23% (8% provincial + 15% federal)	Invest Alberta
Small business tax (first $500,000)	11% (2% provincial + 9% federal)	Invest Alberta
Provincial sales tax / payroll tax / health premiums	None / none / none	Invest Alberta
Effective commercial property tax	2.1% (Edmonton 2.6%)	Invest Alberta
Tech ecosystem value, July 2023 to December 2025	$7 billion	Calgary Economic Development / Startup Genome
Venture capital raised, 2021-2025	$3.4 billion	Startup Genome
Tech workforce growth, 2021-2024	+61%	CBRE Scoring Tech Talent
Airport passengers, 2025	19.4 million (record)	Calgary Airport Authority
Active business licences (storefront and commercial)	23,261	City of Calgary open data
Crime Severity Index, 2025	62.94 (Canada 75.01); #26 safest of 58 cities of 100,000+	Statistics Canada
Average apartment rent (October 2025)	$1,775 a month; vacancy 4.9%	CMHC Rental Market Survey
Benchmark home price (October 2026)	$564,200	CREB

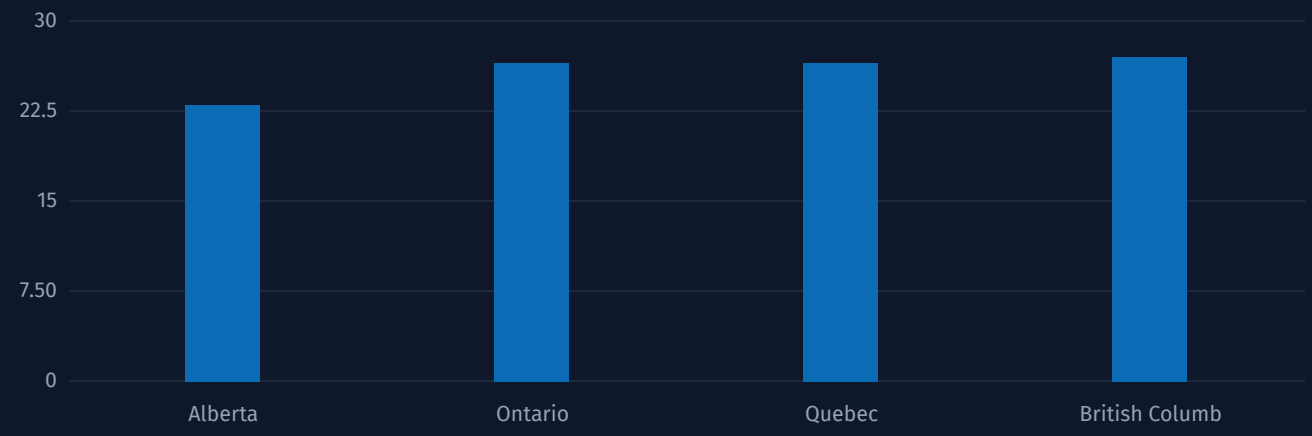
2 Ease of doing business: the Alberta tax advantage

Alberta has the **lowest general corporate income tax rate in Canada: 8%**, for a combined federal-provincial rate of 23%. The province has **no sales tax, no payroll tax and no health-care premiums**, and a flat personal income tax. Invest Alberta estimates Alberta's tax advantage at **$16.9 billion in 2026-27**: what people and businesses here would pay in extra provincial taxes under any other province's system.

For a business that means more of each dollar of profit to reinvest, lower prices for customers (5% GST only, against 13% HST in Ontario), and lower costs to hire. Alberta's combined corporate rate is also lower than the

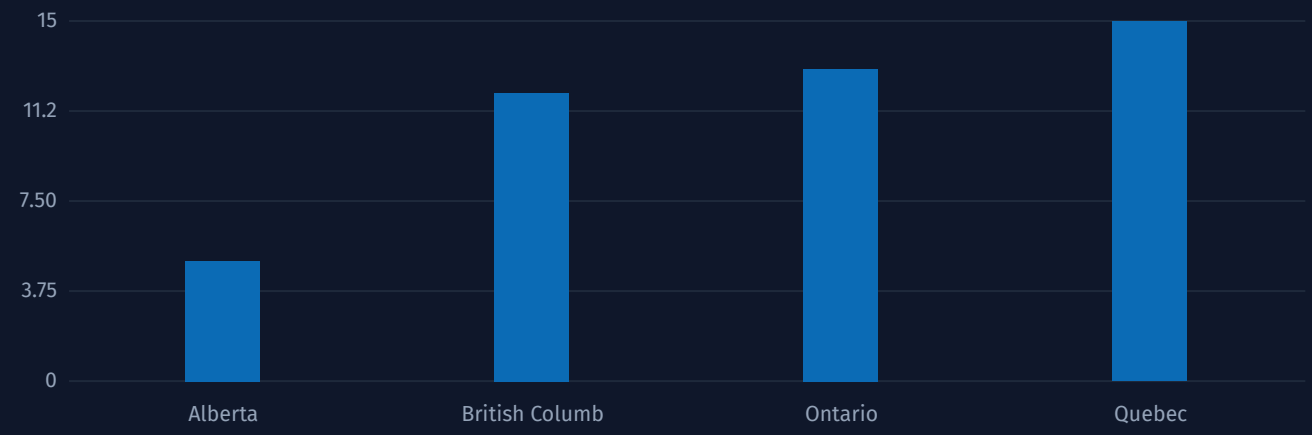
federal-plus-state rate in 44 U.S. jurisdictions. Calgary's effective commercial property tax is 2.1%, against 2.6% in Edmonton.

Combined general corporate income tax rate (%)



% · Provincial general rates: Alberta 8%, Ontario 11.5%, Quebec 11.5%, British Columbia 12%; federal 15%

Sales tax on most purchases (%)



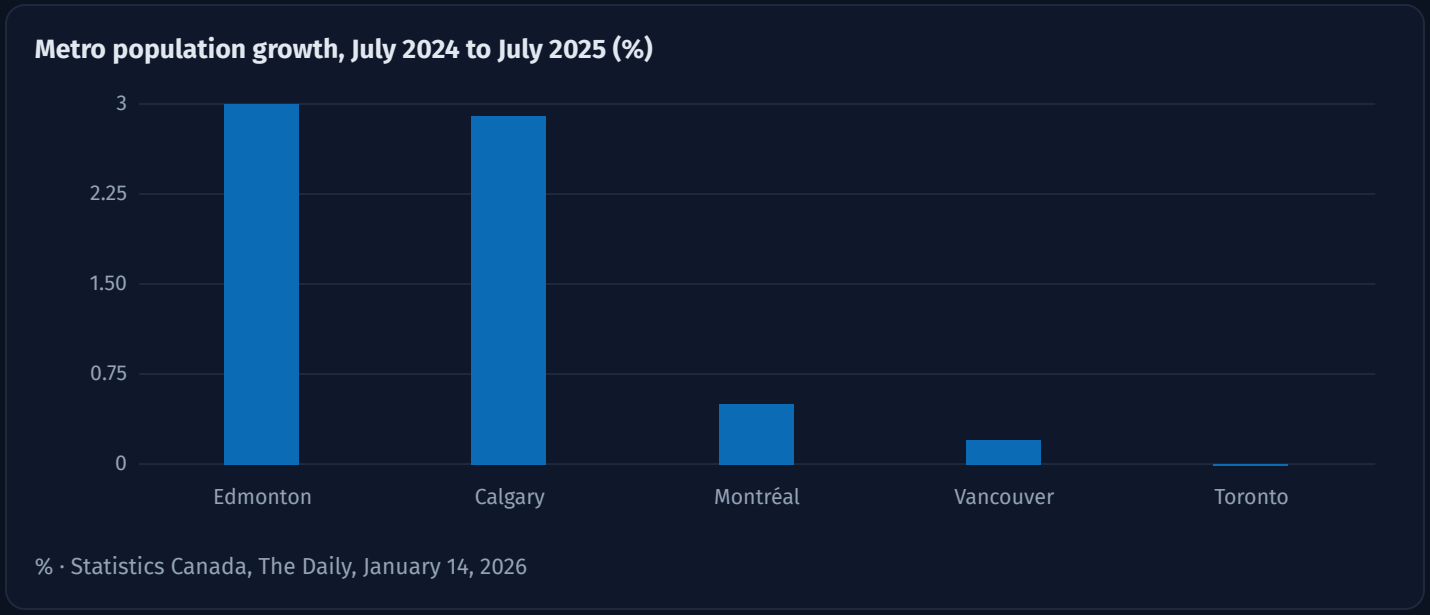
% · GST 5%; BC PST 7%; Ontario HST 13%; Quebec QST 9.975%

3 A growing market and a young, skilled workforce

People keep coming to Calgary. Statistics Canada's estimates for the year to July 1, 2025 put Calgary's metropolitan growth at **2.9%**, tied with Moncton for second among Canada's 41 metropolitan areas behind Edmonton (3.0%), while Toronto (-0.0%), Vancouver (+0.2%) and Montréal (+0.5%) barely grew. Permanent immigration was the main driver.

Inside the city, the Data Desk's community model counts about 309,080 more residents than at the 2021 Census, and most of them live in new suburbs on the city's edge, where shops and services have not caught up (see the opportunities below).

The workforce is young and educated. Calgary's post-secondary institutions (the University of Calgary, Mount Royal University, SAIT, Bow Valley College and Alberta University of the Arts) train engineers, technologists, health workers, business graduates and tradespeople every year, and Calgary's tech workforce grew 61% between 2021 and 2024, the fastest in North America in CBRE's ranking. Alberta's unemployment rate was 6.4% in September 2026: there is talent to hire.



4 Innovation: Canada's fastest-growing startup ecosystem

In Startup Genome's 2026 Global Startup Ecosystem Report, Calgary ranks among the **world's top 50 emerging startup ecosystems**, up 52 places since 2020 and in the top 30 in North America. Its ecosystem was worth **$7 billion** between July 2023 and December 2025, and has grown by nearly **40% a year since 2021**, against 9.6% for Canada as a whole. Calgary startups raised **$3.4 billion in venture capital** from 2021 to 2025.

The strengths are where Calgary already leads: energy and clean technology, agriculture and food, logistics, health and life sciences, and financial and enterprise software. The City's Innovation Strategy aims to support up to 187,000 jobs and $28 billion in economic impact by 2034.

Resources a new company can use:

- **Calgary Economic Development**: site selection, market data, introductions and the Calgary Film Commission.
- **Opportunity Calgary Investment Fund**: the City's fund that co-invests in projects that grow and diversify the economy.
- **Platform Calgary**: the city's startup hub, with programs, space and connections to investors.
- **Innovate Calgary** (University of Calgary): research partnerships, licensing and incubation.
- **Alberta Innovates** and **Invest Alberta**: provincial research funding, grants and investment attraction.
- Federal programs such as PrairiesCan, the Industrial Research Assistance Program and the Scientific Research and Experimental Development tax credit.

5 Infrastructure already in place

Air. Calgary International Airport (YYC) handled a record **19.4 million passengers in 2025**, with direct flights across North America, to Europe and to Asia, and is a hub for WestJet and a major air-cargo gateway for Western Canada.

Rail and road. Calgary is the headquarters of CPKC, the only railway linking Canada, the United States and Mexico, and sits on the Trans-Canada Highway and on Highway 2 north to Edmonton and south toward the U.S. border. Large intermodal and distribution parks on the east side make it a natural base for Western Canadian distribution.

Office space. Downtown Calgary has one of North America's largest stocks of high-quality office space, and a high vacancy rate (27.6% in early 2026, Cresa). For a new tenant that means choice and leasing terms that are hard to find in Toronto or Vancouver. The City's downtown programs have funded conversions of empty office towers to homes, bringing more residents downtown.

Building now. The City's building-permit records show what is being built: the largest recent permits include a new downtown commercial building (about $199 million), Bonnybrook wastewater plant works, airport and industrial upgrades, a new high school, and downtown office-to-home conversions.

Largest recent building permits in Calgary

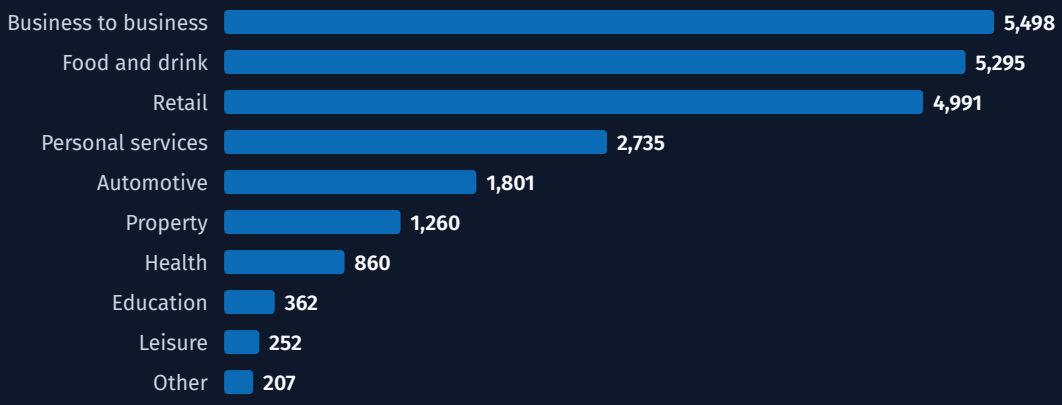
Project	Type	Address	Estimated cost ($ millions)	Issued
New 3 Storey Building, Group A1	Commercial / New	206 8 Av Se	199	2025-11-07
Bonnybrook Centre WWTP WP4	Commercial / New	4500 15 St Se	162	2026-09-23
DTB Pre & Post Roof Replacement	Industrial / Improvement	2000 Airport Rd Ne	64	2026-08-06
Interior Alterations	Industrial / Improvement	928 32 Av Ne	62	2026-08-12
New 2 Storey Building, West Calgary High School (Group A2)	Institutional / New	9750 17 Av Sw	55	2025-12-19
New 4-Storey CANA-PBS Systems Building#2 & 2-Storey Hub Building	Commercial / New	#300 4050 128 Av Se	53	2026-06-17
Advanced Medical & The Academy of the Aged	Institutional / New	31 Currie Ln Sw	50	2026-01-15
Downtown office to residential conversion	Apartment / Improvement	#300 640 5 Av Sw	46	2026-06-19

6 The local market: what the City's business licences show

The City of Calgary licenses about **23,261 storefront and commercial businesses** (home-based businesses are not in the open data), and OpenStreetMap lists another 9,699 shops, restaurants, clinics and services. The number of active licences first issued each year has risen every year: 2,269 in 2024, 2,631 in 2025, 2,842 in 2026 (2026 to early November). Businesses are being opened, and lasting.

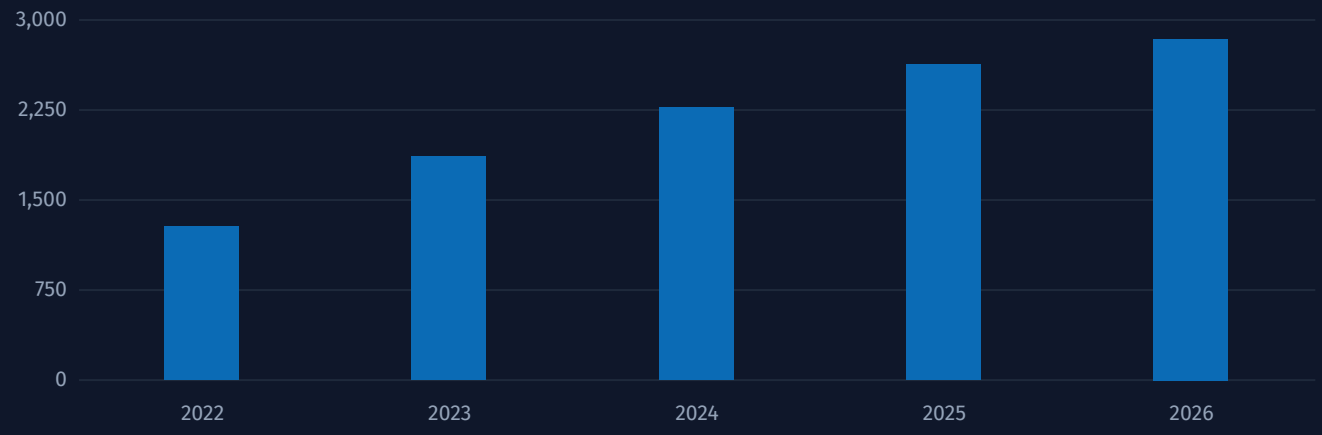
The largest groups are business-to-business services (manufacturing, wholesale, warehousing, contractors), food and drink, and retail.

Active business licences by group



licences · City of Calgary open data, business licences

Active licences by year first issued



licences · City of Calgary open data; 2026 to early November

7 Where the opportunities are: growth that services have not caught up with

Calgary has about **6.1 everyday local businesses per 1,000 residents** (grocery, pharmacy, clinics, dentists, child care, restaurants, hair, fitness, banks and the like). In the fastest-growing communities, the figure is often far lower: 8 of the 15 communities that have added the most residents since 2021 have less than half the city's rate.

These are new suburbs where tens of thousands of people now live, often families with children, and where many still drive to another community for groceries, a doctor or child care. For an investor in retail, health, child care, food or personal services, they are the clearest gaps in the city. The Invest in Calgary page lists every community and category. (A count of zero means no licensed storefront or mapped place inside the community's own boundary; residents use shops in neighbouring communities.)

The 15 communities that have added the most residents since 2021

Community	Residents 2021	Residents today	Added	Local businesses	Per 1,000 residents
Cornerstone	6,190	18,185	11,995	30	1.6
Livingston	3,985	13,246	9,261	0	0.0
Mahogany	13,860	23,084	9,224	82	3.6
Saddle Ridge	24,365	33,166	8,801	91	2.7
Beltline	25,880	33,817	7,937	619	18.3
Carrington	2,750	10,570	7,820	34	3.2
Sage Hill	9,345	16,335	6,990	100	6.1
Seton	3,590	10,308	6,718	87	8.4
Cityscape	5,085	11,099	6,014	17	1.5
Belmont	800	6,458	5,658	9	1.4
Legacy	8,000	13,649	5,649	82	6.0
Springbank Hill	9,840	14,904	5,064	26	1.7
West Springs	11,560	16,335	4,775	121	7.4
Pine Creek	245	4,940	4,695	3	0.6
Skyview Ranch	12,870	17,369	4,499	45	2.6

8 Quality of life and stability

Safety. Calgary's Crime Severity Index was 62.94 in 2025, below Canada's 75.01, and ranks #26 safest of 58 Canadian cities of 100,000 or more.

Liveability and cost. Calgary ranked 5th in the world in the EIU Global Liveability Index in 2024. Homes cost far less than in Toronto or Vancouver: the CREB benchmark price was $564,200 in October 2026, and the average apartment rent was $1,775 a month in CMHC's October 2025 survey, with 4.9% vacancy.

Political stability. In the October 2026 referendum, 75.0% of Albertans and 82.4% of Calgary voters chose for Alberta to remain a province of Canada. The next provincial election is set for October 18, 2027.

9 Risks to weigh

A good investment case states the risks too.

- **Energy cycles.** Oil and gas still drive much of Alberta's economy and public revenue; low prices slow hiring, spending and property values.
- **Office market.** High downtown vacancy is good for tenants but a risk for office landlords and lenders.
- **Housing cooling.** Calgary home sales fell 15.3% year over year in October 2026 and prices have eased: good for affordability, a caution for residential investors.
- **Jobs.** Alberta's unemployment rate (6.4% in September 2026) has been near or above Canada's.
- **Policy change.** Provincial and federal policy (trade, immigration, energy) can shift quickly; follow the 2027 provincial election and any changes to the electoral map and referendum follow-up.

10 How to set up in Calgary: the main steps

- **Choose a structure and register it**: incorporate in Alberta (or federally and register extra-provincially) through an Alberta registry agent.
- **Get a business number** from the Canada Revenue Agency, and register for GST if sales will exceed $30,000 a year.
- **Check the land use** of your site with the City of Calgary before you sign a lease: zoning decides what business can operate where.
- **Apply for a City business licence** (most storefront and many home-based businesses need one), and development or building permits for any changes to the space.
- **Open a WCB-Alberta account** before hiring, and follow Alberta's employment standards.
- **Use the free help**: Calgary Economic Development, Business Link Alberta and Invest Alberta all advise new businesses at no cost.

Options to consider

	Option	Priority
1	**Lead with the tax and cost advantage** Model your costs under Alberta's 23% combined corporate rate, no PST and no payroll tax against your alternative locations. Based on: Invest Alberta: $16.9 billion tax advantage in 2026-27.	High
2	**Look first at fast-growing suburbs for local services** Grocery, pharmacy, clinics, child care and food in the communities with the most new residents and fewest businesses. Based on: 8 of the 15 fastest-growing communities are below half the city rate.	High
3	**Negotiate downtown space while vacancy is high** Tenants can secure quality space and incentives now. Based on: Downtown vacancy 27.6% (Q1 2026).	Medium

	Option	Priority
4	**Plug into the innovation network early** Calgary Economic Development, Platform Calgary, Innovate Calgary and Alberta Innovates. Based on: $3.4 billion VC 2021-2025; ~40% annual ecosystem growth.	Medium
5	**Plan for energy-price cycles** Stress-test revenue against an oil-price downturn and diversify customers. Based on: Energy remains Alberta's largest industry.	Medium

Next steps

Step	Who	How we will know
Contact Calgary Economic Development for site and market data	Investor	Shortlist of sites in 30 days
Check land use and licence needs for each site	Investor / City of Calgary	Zoning confirmed before lease
Use the Data Desk's Invest in Calgary page to size the local market	Investor	Residents and competitors within reach of each site
Register the business, GST, WCB and licence	Investor	Open to trade

How this was worked out

1. Figures quoted from public sources are given with their source and date.
2. Population: the City of Calgary's estimate for November 2026, shared across communities by actual growth (the Data Desk's default way of counting residents).
3. Business licences: City of Calgary open data, active licences; the year is the year each licence was first issued, so earlier years count only the businesses still open.
4. Local businesses per 1,000 residents: licences and OpenStreetMap places in everyday local categories, counted by community.
5. Crime ranking: Statistics Canada Crime Severity Index by police service, cities of 100,000 or more (see the Safest cities page).

Data sources

Source	Publisher	Period used	Notes
Alberta's tax advantage https://investalberta.ca/why-alberta/tax-advantage/	Invest Alberta		
Calgary tech ecosystem growing faster than any market in Canada (June 18, 2026) https://www.calgaryeconomicdevelopment.com/news/calgary-tech-ecosystem-growing-faster-than-any-market-in-canada/	Calgary Economic Development		

Source	Publisher	Period used	Notes
Canada's population estimates: subprovincial areas, July 1, 2025 https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/260114/dq260114a-eng.htm	Statistics Canada		
YYC welcomed 19.4 million passengers in 2025 https://www.yyc.com/en-us/media-centre/artmid/2616/articleid/186/yyc-calgary-international-airport-welcomed-194-million-passengers-in-2025	Calgary Airport Authority		
Q1 2026 Calgary Downtown Office Report https://www.cresa.com/Locations/North-America/Alberta-Canada/Calgary-AB/Market-Research/Q1-2026-Calgary-Downtown-Office-Occupier	Cresa		
Calgary home sales drop 15.3% in October https://www.cp24.com/news/canada/2026/11/02/calgary-home-sales-drop-153-in-october-real-estate-board/	CP24 / The Canadian Press		
Alberta's jobless rate, September 2026 https://www.ctvnews.ca/calgary/article/albertas-jobless-rate-drops-below-national-level-in-september/	CTV News		
Calgary is the fifth most livable city in the world (2024) https://www.ctvnews.ca/calgary/article/calgary-is-the-fifth-most-livable-city-in-the-world-report/	CTV News		
Business licences; building permits; communities https://data.calgary.ca/d/vdjc-pybd	City of Calgary Open Data		
Police-reported crime statistics (Crime Severity Index) https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510002601	Statistics Canada		
Rental Market Survey, October 2025 https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-data/data-tables/rental-market	CMHC		

What this cannot tell you

- Comparisons with other cities use the most recent public figures; some (liveability, office vacancy) are from earlier in 2026 or before.
- Home-based businesses are not in the City's open licence data, so local business counts are a floor.
- OpenStreetMap is maintained by volunteers and may miss some places, especially in the newest communities.
- This report is general information for investors, not financial, legal or tax advice.