Lethbridge-Medicine Hat Labour Market Update

September 2026 | Employer-focused monthly briefing

Labour Market Overview

Alberta employment increased by 23,100 in September and the provincial unemployment rate declined to 6.4%. In the Lethbridge-Medicine Hat Economic Region, employment was 156,800 and unemployment was 11,700. The regional unemployment rate was 6.9%.

Key Highlights

- Alberta employment reached 2,684,200, up 75,700 year-over-year.
- Alberta full-time employment increased by 25,800 month-over-month, while part-time employment decreased by 2,700.
- The regional labour force was 168,500, with a 63.1% participation rate and 58.7% employment rate.
- Q2 2026 regional job vacancies were 4,515 and the job vacancy rate was 3.3%.
- Alberta recorded 73,130 job vacancies and a 3.3% vacancy rate in July 2026.
- Sales and service remained the largest regional occupation category at 31,800.
- Health occupations recorded the largest year-over-year increase, rising by 9,000 to 22,100.

Labour Market Indicators

Indicator	Lethbridge-Medicine Hat ER	Alberta
Employment	156,800	2,684,200
Employment rate	58.7%	Not reported
Unemployment	11,700	184,200
Unemployment rate	6.9%	6.4%
Labour force	168,500	2,868,300
Participation rate	63.1%	68.9%
Job vacancies	4,515 (Q2 2026)	73,130 (July 2026)
Job vacancy rate	3.3% (Q2 2026)	3.3% (July 2026)

Occupation Trends

September 2026 regional employment and change from September 2025:

Occupation category	Employment	YoY change
Sales and service	31,800	-4,000
Trades, transport and equipment operators	29,300	+600
Health	22,100	+9,000
Business, finance and administration	19,500	+700
Natural resources, agriculture and related production	12,500	+2,900
Management	11,700	-5,100

Medicine Hat and Brooks Local Snapshot

Local area	Unemployment rate	YoY rate change	YoY employment growth
Medicine Hat	6.0% (July 2026)	-0.4 percentage points	+1.0%
Brooks	7.8% (July 2026)	+0.2 percentage points	-8.4%

Local figures are the latest verified municipal-level estimates available for this update. Unemployment rates are three-month moving averages and are unadjusted for seasonality. July 2026 does not align with the September economic-region reference period, so the series should not be directly compared.

What the Data Suggests

Provincial conditions improved through higher employment and lower unemployment. Regionally, sales and service and trades-related occupations remained the two largest groups. Health employment grew strongly year-over-year, while management and sales and service employment declined. Regional labour-force estimates are seasonally unadjusted three-month moving averages; provincial labour-force estimates are seasonally adjusted monthly figures. Vacancy measures are labelled with their different reference periods and are not directly period-matched.

Employer Considerations

- Align recruitment and retention planning with strong regional employment in health and trades-related occupations.
- Consider training current employees where recruitment is difficult or business productivity could be improved.
- Review several months of regional occupational data before acting on a single monthly change.

Workforce Resources and Opportunities

Canada-Alberta Productivity Grant: Reimburses 75% of eligible training costs up to $5,000 per trainee, subject to a $100,000 employer cap per fiscal year. Applicant guidelines.

Workforce Retention and Retraining Program - Work-Sharing: Supports employers and eligible employees during a temporary reduction in business activity through reduced work schedules and Employment Insurance income support. Program overview.

Sources

1. Government of Alberta, Labour Force Statistics: Alberta Highlights, September 2026, released October 9, 2026.

2. Government of Alberta, Lethbridge-Medicine Hat Regional Insights. Regional indicators and occupation estimates are Labour Force Survey three-month moving averages, unadjusted for seasonality.

3. Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey and Job Vacancy and Wage Survey estimates, as reproduced by the Government of Alberta.

4. Government of Alberta, Canada-Alberta Productivity Grant Applicant Guidelines, updated October 8, 2026.

5. Government of Alberta, Unemployment rate and employment in Alberta sub-regions, July 2026; Statistics Canada Table 14-10-0480-01.

6. Employment and Social Development Canada, Workforce Retention and Retraining Program - Work-Sharing.