

HIRING, MOBILITY AND NEEDED SUPPORTS: ALBERTA EMPLOYERS AND TRADESPEOPLE SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

This report summarizes findings from two complementary surveys conducted by Ipsos on behalf of the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF-FCA). The research explores how hiring and employment is being impacted by labour market disruptions such as tariffs, skills shortages, geo-political strife and labour mobility barriers, from both employer and tradesperson perspectives.

The employer survey included 419 Alberta employers involved in hiring or supervising tradespeople and was conducted by a dual phone and online methodology between February 11 and April 6, 2026. The tradespeople survey included 511 Alberta tradespeople and was fielded online between January 30 and February 10, 2026.



The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.

Overall Business and Job Market Outlook

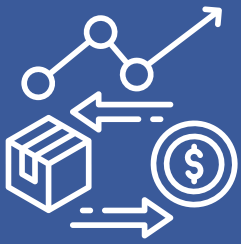
Both employers and tradespeople express generally positive sentiments about the current business and job market in Alberta.

A majority (56%) of employers rate the current business climate for their industry as good (vs. 16% poor). The sentiment is even more positive among tradespeople with six-in-ten (62%) saying the job market is good in the trades right now (vs. 11% poor).

There is some divergence in views of how things have changed in the past 12 months.

Employers are more likely to say conditions have worsened in the past year (30%) than improved (16%). In contrast, tradespeople are more likely to say the job market has improved (48%) versus worsened (23%) over the last 12 months.

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, both employers and tradespeople are more optimistic than pessimistic. Employers are roughly twice as likely to believe the business climate will improve (32%) as worsen (15%). Tradespeople are even more optimistic, with 56% expecting the job market to improve, compared to 16% who expect it to worsen.



Impact of Tariffs and Trade Disputes

Despite the overall positive assessments of the business and job climate, tariffs and the trade dispute are hurting many Alberta employers and tradespeople. Two-thirds (66%) of employers and nearly half (48%) of tradespeople report that they have been negatively impacted by the tariffs and trade dispute with the United States.

Increasing costs is the number one impact on employers. More than eight-in-ten

(83%) employers report increased costs due to tariffs and the trade dispute. Other widespread negative impacts include supply chain disruptions (67%), a need to raise prices (67%) and general business uncertainty (52%).

Increased stress is the number one impact on tradespeople. One-third (34%) say they have experienced personal stress and one-third (32%) say they have experienced financial stress. Other impacts include jobs being cancelled or cut back (20%), hours of work cut back (16%) and having to accept less desirable work (15%).

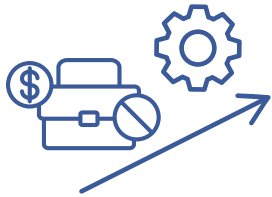
Employment, Layoffs, and Hiring Trends

Direct job losses attributed to tariffs and the trade dispute are limited. More than one-in-three (36%) employers report layoffs of tradespeople in the past 12 months, but only one-quarter (24%) of these employers (9% of all employers) attribute these layoffs as being even partially due to tariffs and the trade dispute. The same pattern holds among apprentice employers, with only 5% of these employers saying they had layoffs of apprentices in the past 12 months that were even partially due to tariffs and the trade dispute.

However, while layoffs are not widely driven by tariffs and the trade dispute, they are a significant contributing factor in reduced hiring plans. Three-in-ten (31%) employers

have cancelled or reduced plans to hire new tradespeople over the last 12 months, and two-thirds (64%) of these employers (20% of all employers) say this is at least partially due to tariffs and the trade dispute. Moreover, one-quarter (25%) of apprentice employers have cancelled or reduced plans to hire new apprentices over the next 12 months, and two-thirds (66%) of these employers (16% of all apprentice employers) say this is at least partially due to tariffs and the trade dispute.

There is also a risk of tradespeople leaving the trades in the next 12 months. Nearly four-in-ten (37%) tradespeople say they are “very likely” (10%) or “somewhat likely” (27%) to leave the trades in the next 12 months to find work in another sector. And among these tradespeople, three-quarters (74%) say it is at least partially due to tariffs and the trade dispute.



Labour Mobility and Workforce Challenges

Many employers face challenges recruiting and hiring from outside Alberta. Six-in-ten employers who recruit and hire from outside Alberta say it is “very challenging” or “somewhat challenging” to recruit and hire tradespeople (61%) and apprentices (61%) from other provinces to work in Alberta. The biggest barriers include getting prior education/training recognized (44%), inconsistent licensing and certification recognition (40%), and understanding worker skills/capacity and what they can safely do on-the-job (37%).

Many tradespeople also face challenges moving to Alberta. Among the three-in-ten (30%) tradespeople who moved to Alberta to work in the trades, half (52%) say it was at least somewhat challenging to get their credentials recognized and qualify to work. The biggest challenges include getting recognition for previous hours and learning (30%), registering with different provincial Workers’ Compensation Boards (26%), adjusting to new occupational health and safety standards (25%) and obtaining safety certificates (24%).

Alberta tradespeople are mobile and many are open to moving out of province to pursue work. A majority (56%) of tradespeople say they would be at least somewhat likely to leave Alberta if a good opportunity in their trade was available in another region of Canada.

Support and Policy Opportunities



Employers want more money for training and employer tax credits for hiring apprentices. More than eight-in-ten employers say it would be helpful to have more money for training (85%) and employer tax credits for hiring apprentices (84%). Seven-in-ten (71%) say it would be helpful to have reductions in red tape, and a majority (55%) say it would be helpful to have access to a tool to help streamline their hiring process based on Red Seal standards.

Tradespeople are receptive to every idea tested in the survey to provide them with help and support. The top-rated supports include an online resource to compare current skills to what is needed in Red Seal trades (77% very/somewhat helpful), information about labour mobility (75%) and exam resources and study tips for Red Seal examinations (72%).

Tradespeople also overwhelmingly say it is important that Canada offers tax credits and grants for training/tools (90%), provides funding for more technical training seats for apprentices (88%), reduces red tape (85%) and ensures apprentices are hired on public projects (83%).



Conclusion

Alberta's skilled trades labour market is strong and optimistic, but is facing growing pressure from tariffs, rising costs and labour market challenges. While tariffs have not led to widespread layoffs, they are contributing to reduced hiring plans, increased business uncertainty and added stress for tradespeople. At the same time, some mobility barriers are making it difficult for employers to access workers, even as many tradespeople indicate a willingness to move for the right opportunities.