

# Year in Review 2024

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Economic  
Development  
**Lethbridge**

The logo for Lethbridge Economic Development, featuring a stylized four-pointed star or flower icon in blue and yellow.



# Our Mission

To strengthen and diversify the Lethbridge regional economy.

- **Over \$10 Million in Investment**
- **38 New Jobs Created**
- **600 Business Coaching Sessions**
- **Over 130,000 Website Visits**
- **85 Rural Renewal Stream Endorsement Letters Issued**

2025 is off to a busy start, and EDL is excited to work on growing and expanding current projects and launching new initiatives.

With funding from PrairiesCAN, EDL will add two members to the team to help work on the Supply Chain and Logistics sector in our region. These individuals will focus on building up Canada's Western Gateway Trade and Logistics Corridor.

Logistics is a global industry, and with continued work on this portfolio, EDL will market our region as an excellent place for investment and growth.

We look forward to working with the City of Lethbridge in a couple of ways in 2025. Our organizational review, conducted by the City of Lethbridge, will help look for efficiencies and is an exercise we welcome to help showcase our results, our work, and the value we bring to growing our community.

Once again, EDL will provide any economic data and indicators to community members who want to represent our city by serving on Lethbridge City Council and running in this fall's upcoming municipal election.

One of the organization's key pieces of work this year will involve Canada/US relations and how the uncertainty of tariffs and trade can and will affect our community.

EDL and other community organizations will collaborate to provide local and regional businesses and industries with data and solutions to prepare for uncertainty now and in the future.



# Thank You!

Economic Development Lethbridge could not accomplish our work without a strong network of partner organizations, vendors, business advisors, mentors, and Lethbridge and area business community support.

We understand and truly live our community brand motto, Lethbridge:

## Brighter Together

Some of the Partnerships we are proud to be a part of include:



We also are proud to work with our regional, provincial and national partners:



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Timothy Hachkowski,  
Board Chair & President

# Innovating for Impact

How EDL is Leveraging Technology to Drive Productivity and Collaboration.

Serving as President of Economic Development Lethbridge this past year has been an honour.

Throughout the year, we've achieved significant milestones. The success of "Team Lethbridge" in Edmonton garnered key interest in crucial water and wastewater infrastructure; these considerable projects are vital for the region's continued growth. We also returned to an operating surplus in our operating budget and embraced innovation by integrating AI and technology for business efficiency and governance.

Most importantly, we delivered exceptional value on our core mission: Driving direct investment into the city and region.

Our CPFC (Canada's Premier Food Corridor) initiative has hit its stride, delivering measurable growth and solidifying our position as a leader in the agri-food sector. Simultaneously, our Investment Attraction (IA) efforts yield remarkable, tangible results, bringing crucial capital and opportunities to Lethbridge residents.

I extend my gratitude to each of our dedicated board members, partners, and stakeholders. I especially thank our exceptional staff this year and Trevor as he approaches a ten-year milestone of dedicated leadership, excellence, and innovation, cultivating an organizational reputation for results. His contributions have been invaluable in elevating Lethbridge as a place to live, work, invest, learn, and thrive.

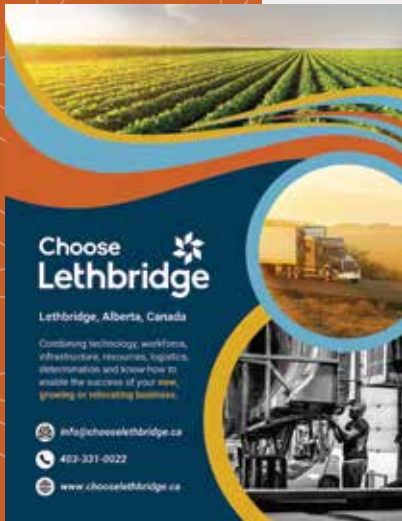
In 2024, EDL continued to use new technologies to increase productivity and efficiency.

Further use of ChatGPT, Meltwater, AirTable, and other digital tools allow the staff to use these platforms and software to help increase productivity.

The foray into these new tools also led to the organization leading the way in adoption and working with other regional organizations about how they can leverage these tools for their day-to-day operations. Economic Development Lethbridge's CEO, Trevor Lewington, continued to work with local businesses to help better understand employee/employer relations with Insights Discovery.

The tool focuses on how different archetypes interact with one another and has been a valuable exercise not only for EDL but also for each organization that completes it. The program comes with a minimal cost to the business, which is then allocated to the EDL budget as a cost benefit to the organization.

Continuous updates to the EDL and Teconnect business continuity plans ensure that the organization is alert to instances where it may be at risk. In 2024, policies that were updated included cyber security, social media, and business advisor agreements.



Marketing in 2024 focused on key initiatives such as workforce development and providing continuous updates on programs and initiatives for job seekers and employers in Lethbridge.

A consistent theme in 2024 was highlighting the benefits of our city and region to a global audience through social media channels, articles and media releases, and eye-catching infographics.

Another impactful component of marketing efforts in 2024 was developing a new and vibrant website. The new look Choose Lethbridge website, which will be unveiled in early 2025, will focus on the user experience and provide an easy-to-navigate website, allowing users to explore and research our community.

The website will offer a Market Data component filled with key economic indicators and information to help investors, site selectors, local businesses, entrepreneurs and residents.



## Lethbridge is...

A diverse, innovative hub driving investment, sustainability, and academic excellence.

“Marquee collaborative initiatives like Canada’s Premier Food Corridor, ElevateIP Alberta and RINSA continued to make solid progress against their respective work plans and objectives detailed further in this year in review report. Lethbridge’s economy is highly integrated with and dependent on the surrounding region which underscores the importance of working with our partners.

Responding to changes in federal immigration programs required adjustments to our administration of the Rural Renewal and Rural Entrepreneur streams of the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program. We continued to work with community groups like Rotary and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress to offer English language training to support the integration of skilled evacuees into local workplaces.

We led another highly successful Team Lethbridge Mission to Edmonton in November. 44 representatives from 19 community organizations engaged with provincial Ministers and government officials. The meetings focused on advocating for community priorities while highlighting the value Lethbridge creates for the province.

Looking forward, the threat of wide-ranging tariffs and a changing trade relationship with the United States could create significant challenges for our business community.

The EDL team will need to be highly responsive to industry requests for support and ensure we adjust our business plan to reflect a new reality more focused on investment from Asia and Europe.”

*Trevor Lewington, Chief Executive Officer*

Economic Development Lethbridge is an arms-length organization supported by the City of Lethbridge. It is governed by a 31-member volunteer Board of Directors and managed by a team of professionals dedicated to promoting economic prosperity in Lethbridge. To best accomplish the organization's mission and objectives, board members are drawn from a diverse cross-section of the community.

# 2024 Board Members

**Agriculture/Agri-Food**  
John Ross

**Airport**  
Vacant

**Arts, Culture & Entertainment**  
Mary Ann Crow Healy

**Chamber of Commerce**  
Charlene Scheffelmaier

**City Mayor**  
Blaine Hyggen

**City Councillor**  
Mark Campbell, Jeff Carlson,  
Nick Paladino

**City Manager/Designate**  
Lloyd Brierley, Nicole Mitton

**Community & Social Services**  
Robin James

**Construction**  
Blayne Janssens

**Education**  
Tricia Doherty

**Environment**  
Shannon Frank

**Financial & Professional Services**  
Obed Maurice

**Health & Wellness**  
Dr. Steven Ha

**Hospitality & Tourism**  
Jody Young

**Indigenous**  
Byron Jackson

**Industrial & Manufacturing**  
Matthew Salmon

**Lethbridge College**  
Jason Donkersgoed

**Lethbridge County**  
Tory Campbell

**Multicultural**  
Sampath Walgama

**Non-Profit**  
Sandra Mintz

**Past President**  
Adriana Mercader

**Real Estate & Development**  
Ken Harvie

**Regional Economic Development**  
Peter Casurella

**Retail**  
Jeremy Roden

**Sector-At-Large**  
Vacant

**Seniors**  
Keith Sumner

**Sports & Recreation**  
Susan Eymann

**Supply Chain & Logistics**  
Brent Peterson

**Technology**  
Ed Limon

**University of Lethbridge**  
Dena McMartin

**Young Entrepreneur**  
Timothy Hachkowski  
(Board Chair & President)

**Young Professional**  
Jared Boras



Team Lethbridge made their 8th trip to Edmonton in November. The mission to advocate on behalf of Lethbridge and the region was attended by 44 community leaders representing 19 local organizations.

During their time in Edmonton, the team elevated the awareness of Lethbridge's collaborative and business-friendly community in the province.

This mission had 20 high-powered meetings with cabinet members. The delegation also hosted receptions for both parties, with nearly 30 MLAs, the Premier of Alberta, and the official opposition leader in attendance over two nights. The meetings have increased awareness about Lethbridge and how we can help build a stronger Alberta.



Working Together  
for a Stronger Alberta

*\*Orange indicates City of Lethbridge appointed positions*

As the first full year of developing a creative industries support system for the Lethbridge region, 2024 was about developing relationships with key industry organizations and establishing a presence at industry events.

This included a January Alberta Emmy event in Los Angeles for *The Last of Us*, a Calgary Underground Film Festival panel in April, the High-Level Innovation Conference in May, the Banff World Media Festival in June, the Lethbridge Independent Film Festival, the Lethbridge Independent Film Society 48 Hour Film Challenge, and the Toronto International Film Festival in September.

We also participated in Indigenous filmmaking events such as the IndigiTech program for youth and the Lily Gladstone Day in Browning, Montana, highlighting the opportunity to develop indigenous-focused storytelling and industry.

For the gaming industry, we began working with groups like the Lethbridge Game Developers Guild, which held the 'Alberta Game Stampede Roadshow' and connected local companies to experts in developing their game projects.

Through outreach to production managers and locations scouts, we increased the number of scouting inquiries for major film and television productions from the usual two per year to eleven in 2024. We also gathered pictures and video content of city locations and started the work on the Lethbridge Creative Industries brand and website, which will be launched in 2025.

In 2024, EDL responded to **47 inquiries**, securing **3 new investments** with **a conversion rate of 6%**. These investments led to **\$2,019,000 in new capital**, directly contributing to the local economy. Additionally, **28 new jobs were created**, with the potential for 12 more as one of the latest investments plans to expand its workforce.

While the broader economic landscape remains impacted by the uncertainty around tariffs and trade policies under the Trump administration, which could affect our attractiveness to U.S. investors, EDL is actively exploring opportunities to shift focus to other markets. While not yet reallocating resources, we are closely monitoring the situation and assessing the potential impacts on our investment attraction efforts.

This proactive approach will help us adapt to changes and ensure we are positioned to pursue new opportunities in the face of evolving challenges. The expansion of Canada's Western Gateway initiative will see the hiring of two new staff members, further boosting our capacity to support the supply chain and logistics sector.

This initiative is aligned with EDL's commitment to driving economic growth through strategic partnerships, including those with Invest Alberta, Invest in Canada, and the Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative (SAITI). Collaborating with SAITI will also streamline our approach to managing increased inbound traffic from successful marketing campaigns, enhancing our lead-generation efforts.

As we continue to navigate challenges and opportunities, EDL remains optimistic about the future. Lethbridge is well-positioned to attract sustainable investment and drive continued economic growth through a mix of focused international outreach, strengthened local initiatives, and strategic partnerships.



In 2024, EDL continued to play a vital role in supporting the growth and sustainability of local businesses, enhancing the region's economic resilience.

EDL's proactive approach included facilitating strategic partnerships, providing support to companies navigating challenges, and ensuring Lethbridge remains an attractive destination for business.

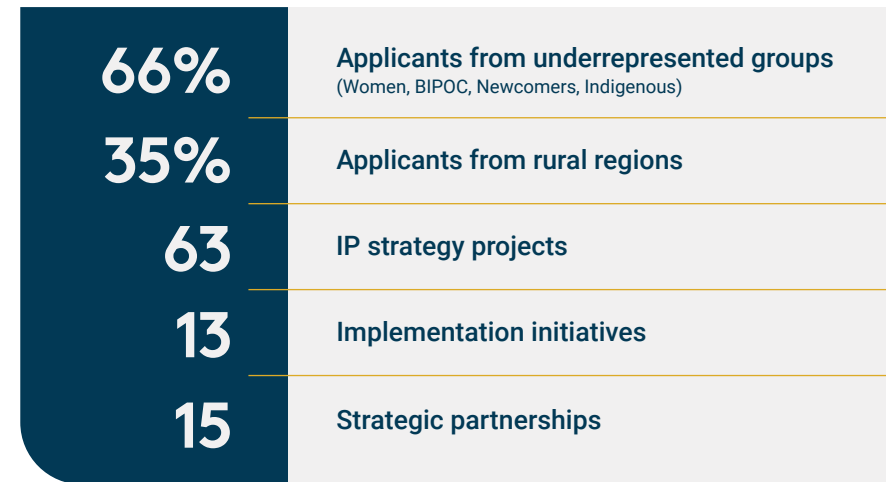
- 5 BRE inquiries led to an \$8M expansion, creating 10 new jobs and strengthening local economic growth.**
- In 2024, EDL exceeded their initial estimate of issuing 75 Rural Renewal Stream endorsement letters and issued 85, as well as 14 Rural Entrepreneur Stream endorsement letters.**
- 43 companies were approved, supporting workforce diversification and sustainable sector growth**
- EDL founded the Lethbridge Manufacturing Association, empowering manufacturers to tackle challenges and enhance operations.**
- Despite immigration challenges, EDL remains focused on attracting talent and driving business growth for Lethbridge's economic stability.**



ElevateIP Alberta experienced rapid growth in its second year of programming ensuring that intellectual property (IP) strategy is accessible to all entrepreneurs, regardless of background or location.

This program, a partnership between Economic Development Lethbridge, Innovate Calgary, and the University of Calgary, provides streamlined applications, a centralized Education Portal, and a tiered partnership model to enhance collaboration across regions and ecosystem navigators.

These initiatives make IP strategy development more actionable and integrated across Alberta's entrepreneurial ecosystem. In particular, the collaboration with the Canadian Council for Indigenous Business (CCIB) has shown progress on bringing attention to special IP protections for Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Creative Expressions.



By standardizing IP strategies, fostering collaboration, and engaging partners at every level, ElevateIP Alberta is breaking down barriers, creating new opportunities, and ensuring that every entrepreneur has the tools to compete, scale, and thrive in Alberta's innovation economy.





2024 was a transformative year for EDL's partnership within RINSA, marked by expansion, groundbreaking events, and stronger support for entrepreneurs in southwest Alberta. As the partnership adapted to a shifting funding landscape, it embraced opportunities to enhance capacity and showcase regional strengths.

Artificial Intelligence played a key role in 2024, as RINSA developed its large language models, led AI workshops, and collaborated with Digirole (Finland) to advance AI in entrepreneurship. These efforts culminated in an international webinar showcasing AI's potential for business growth and positioning Lethbridge on the global stage as an early adopter and leader in emerging technology applications.

The inaugural High-Level Innovation Conference debuted at the Lethbridge and District Agrifood Hub, drawing over 600 attendees. The event connected youth to entrepreneurship, highlighted local innovation, and established Lethbridge as a hub for creative industries. In 2025, RINSA will further its involvement in this anchor event with new partners and interactive elements showcasing our innovation and emerging technology ecosystem.

RINSA proudly supported the 3rd annual Launch Point Pitch Competition, now with Lethbridge Polytechnic as a partner. A standout winner advanced to Inventures, a provincial stage, securing 3rd place at the Student Pitch Competition, further amplifying regional talent.

RINSA onboarded 47 new clients, bringing our total client numbers to over 400 companies, and conducted 600+ coaching sessions with new startups and entrepreneurs that strengthened regional partnerships. In 2025, we will deepen AI education, support anchor events that showcase Lethbridge like the High-Level Innovation Conference, and pioneer new pathways for entrepreneur's success and growth.



In 2024, Canada's Premier Food Corridor (CPFC) strengthened its position as a key driver of economic development in southern Alberta. Through investment attraction efforts, business retention initiatives, and strategic partnerships, CPFC continued to enhance the region's agri-food sector.

CPFC expanded its reach by engaging in trade shows and industry events across Canada and the western U.S., fostering new investment opportunities. A key highlight was the Brighter Together Food Journey, where 35 influential agri-food leaders toured regional facilities, showcasing the corridor's opportunities firsthand.

Investment attraction efforts generated 10 qualified leads, supported by strengthened collaborations with Invest Alberta and Invest in Canada. CPFC launched its Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) strategy in early 2024, driven by insights from the 2023 needs assessment. This resulted in expanded business resources, one-on-one support, learning opportunities, networking events, and marketing initiatives.

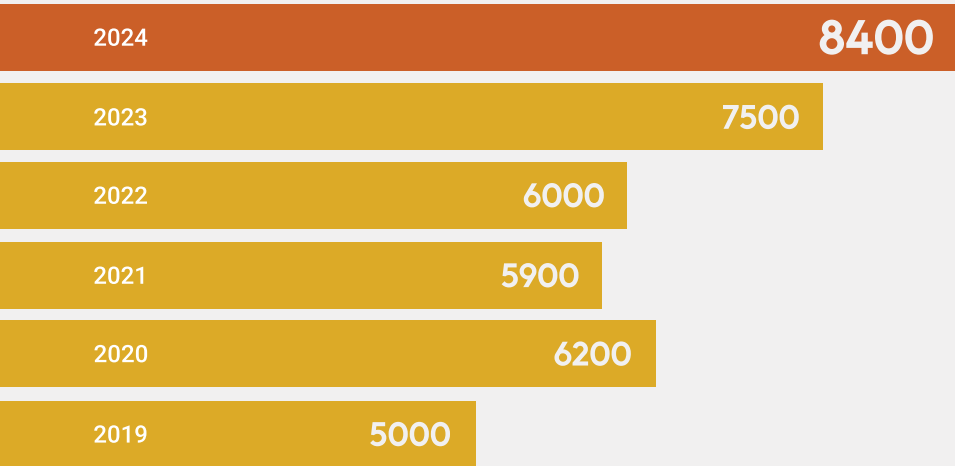


The past year witnessed the creation and evolution of workforce initiatives premised around solutions for local employers and their labour force needs.

Building on completing the Automation and Manufacturing Workforce study, we launched the Lethbridge Manufacturing Association (LMA) to address issues of shared concern for industry partners in this sector.

Workforce issues are an essential component of this initiative, as employers in this sector navigate ongoing policy changes that impact their ability to find and retain qualified staff. We look forward to building on this initiative's work to date over the year ahead.

Lethbridge CMA - Number Employed in Manufacturing - Annual Comparison



Source: Statistic Canada, 14-10-0458-01

Labour supply remains a priority for local industry. Our annual business survey confirms that employers are looking to EDL for assistance in finding and retaining staff.

The rising cost of labour was also projected to be the biggest obstacle local industry faces in the year ahead, something that underscores the need to focus on initiatives geared towards augmenting the supply of qualified workers and exploring solutions to help connect employers with underutilized sources of labour.

Indicator	2024	2023	Year over Year % change
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	5.2%	5.1%	0.1 percentage points
<b>Participation Rate</b>	65.3%	70.9%	-5.6 percentage points
<b>Total Employed</b>	71,600	74,400	-3.8%
<b>Building Permit Values</b> (Year-to-Date values)	\$428.3 Million	\$413.1 Million	3.7%
<b>Housing Starts</b> (Year-to-Date figures)	715	243	194%
<b>Resale Housing Prices</b> (Year-to-Date figures)	\$384,794	\$342,900	12%
<b>Rental Prices</b> (Average Two-Bedroom Rental Price)	\$1,529	\$1,409	11.6%

**Note:** The data in this table compares early 2025/late 2024 figures with early 2024/late 2023 figures to provide a year-over-year comparison of economic trends.