

Calgary leads big wage club

4.9% of workers
earn more than
\$100,000 a year

SORCHA MCGINNIS
AND ROBIN SUMMERFIELD
CALGARY HERALD

At 39 years of age, Doug Rawlyk belongs to an elite Calgary club whose ranks are growing by the day.

The carpenter is one of 29,106 Calgarians earning more than \$100,000 a year, a distinction that helped make this city home to more high-income earners per capita than any other urban centre in Canada.

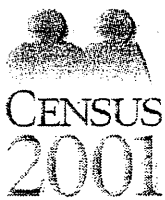
In doing so, Rawlyk also helped double the number of Albertans breaking the six-figure income barrier for the 10-year period ending in 2000, even when inflation is taken into account.

That's the highest increase of big earners of any province in the country.

"Business is good," Rawlyk said as he reflected on income

numbers released by Statistics Canada.

A trade school student who now owns his own construction company, Rawlyk attributed some of his success to labour shortages that are driving up wages.



■ Native education B3

■ Hurdles remain. B3

But he also emphasized that big paydays can't come without some old-fashioned hard work.

"There's money to be made, but everybody has to put in their time," he said.

And according to the most recent data, Calgarians appear to be doing just that.

About 4.9 per cent of Calgary workers broke the six-figure income barrier. That compares with about 4.2 per cent of the Canadian working population, or about 500,000 people.

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WAGE: Due to high education

The large number of high-income earners also helped to pull up Calgary's average wage.

Just over 594,000 men and women in Calgary reported receiving employment income during 2000. On average, those people earned \$36,851, fourth among Canada's 27 census metropolitan areas, and well above the national average of \$31,757 for all earners.

Only workers in Toronto, Ottawa-Hull and Windsor had higher levels of employment income.

More than half of Canadian men earning more than \$100,000 worked in sales, marketing or as ad managers, while their high-earning female counterparts tended to be lawyers and family doctors.

The census also shows Canadians are better educated than ever with 20 per cent of the population aged 25 and over having university degrees and 16 per cent holding a college diploma.

Alberta had among the highest-educated workforce, with 29 per cent having university and 19 per cent with college.

Frank Atkins, a professor of economics at the University of Calgary, attributed the upsurge in wages to good economic times and a strong work ethic.

"People are keen, they like to work and don't mind working hard," he said.

"When the economy is doing well, there are opportunities for all levels," Atkins said.

Canada's high income club

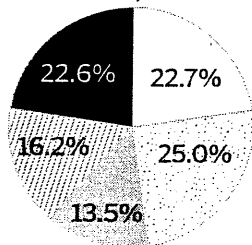
Top five cities whose income earners make more than \$100,000 a year, according to Statistics Canada 2000 figures:

Calgary	4.9%
Toronto	4.8
Ottawa-Hull	4.3
Vancouver	3.2
Edmonton	2.7

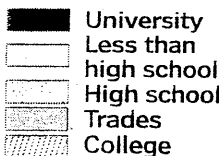
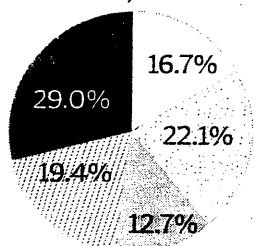
Alberta advantage

Level of education in Calgary's population aged 25 to 64

1991
Population 25 to 64:
419,345



2001
Population 25 to 64:
540,495



Statistics Canada

However, he also warns that while good opportunities still exist in Alberta, the days of being able to make big bucks without a post-secondary education are just about over.

"We have a highly educated and highly motivated workforce here and that is key."

Airdrie dentist Vicki McDermid — part of the plus \$100,000 club — exemplifies Atkins' theory.

For her, finding career success in Alberta was more about personal fulfillment than the pursuit of the dollar. She hit the books right after high school to become a dental hygienist. By 24, she was a full-fledged dentist. By 25, she had her own practice. She spent eight years in school after Grade 12.

Today, at 31, she has a thriving dental practice. Life as a dental hygienist wasn't the future she wanted.

"It made me realize I wanted more. It wasn't about the money, it was about being a professional."

University of Calgary education professor Art Schwartz said the demand for education and training will not slow as long as the economy in Alberta thrives.

"The nature of our economy is such that we're attracting well-educated people and highly trained people to staff it, to fuel it, to keep it going," said Schwartz.

That immigration of

well-trained and well-educated people, in turn, expect their children to become well-trained and well-educated and expect a certain standard of education to follow.

Furthermore, added Schwartz, Canada's expansion of college and university sector, which started in the 1960s, continues to grow today.

Baby boomers' grandchildren are today flooding the education system and post-secondary institutions are "scrambling to find places for them," said Schwartz.

Census results "show the payoff in public investment in the 1970s and 1980s," to the post-secondary education system in Canada, said University of Alberta sociologist Graham Lowe.

"The key to any economy these days is human capital and the census data certainly reflects that," said Lowe.

Public funding, from government and other sources needs to keep funding education and training of people in order to drive the province's current economic prosperity.

Of course, past performance is no guarantee of the future prospects.

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