

# Minister Boissonnault announces federal investments for inclusive learning and skills development in Alberta

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*Over \$8.8 million through PrairiesCan will help connect youth and underrepresented Canadians to new career opportunities across diverse sectors*

EDMONTON, AB, Dec. 18, 2023 /CNW/ - Alberta is home to the youngest population in Canada and has the highest number of people moving to it from other provinces. With Alberta's fast growing entrepreneurial culture creating significant demand for skilled workers across various sectors of the economy, the Government of Canada is making investments to help meet the needs of small- and medium-sized businesses while supporting youth and underrepresented Canadians to take advantage of new career opportunities.

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## **\$8.8M towards inclusive learning and skills development in Alberta**



Prairies Economic  
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Over \$8.8 million through PrairiesCan will help connect youth and underrepresented Canadians to new career opportunities across diverse sectors (CNW Group/Prairies Economic Development Canada)

Today, the Honourable Randy Boissonnault, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, on behalf of the Honourable Dan Vandal, Minister for PrairiesCan, announced federal funding of more than \$8.8 million for 11 organizations to deliver quality training that will better prepare youth and underrepresented groups in Alberta to tackle the challenges of tomorrow and innovate across a wide range of industries.

Training will focus on high-growth fields that continue to have current and future workforce demands, including Indigenous economic development, value-added agriculture, data science and digital technology, and technical sales and marketing. Examples of organizations and projects receiving support include:

- **Technology Alberta** is receiving more than \$2.3 million to develop and implement the second phase of its First Industrial Research, Science or Technology (FIRST) job placement program to help post-secondary students and recent graduates find career opportunities with Alberta technology firms.
- **The Alberta Chambers of Commerce** is receiving more than \$765,000 to facilitate alignment and coordination among Alberta's post-secondary institutions and the business community—including collecting and disseminating labour market information, engaging employers and students to expand work integrated learning, and assessing requirements for a shared online portal to connect employers and students through a single access point.
- **The Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)** is receiving more than \$308,000 to create and deliver its Blue Book Program to provide students with the opportunity to move a business from idea to launch.
- **The Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO)** is receiving over \$184,000 to create and deliver a coaching program for Indigenous youth economic development officers, entrepreneurs, and business owners.
- **Young Agrarians** is receiving more than \$1 million to scale-up its Grow-A-Farmer Program to deliver specialized agriculture entrepreneurship programming, on-farm internships, mentorship, and capacity building that increase businesses-readiness and technology adoption for farm entrepreneurs across the Prairies.

Today's investments are expected to help support a total of more than 1,600 jobs and approximately 4,500 training opportunities. Federal funding is provided through three programs administered by PrairiesCan in Alberta: The Community Economic Development and Diversification program (CEDD); the Jobs and Growth Fund (JGF); and the Regional Innovation Ecosystems program (RIE).

Each of the PrairiesCan investments made today is complemented by funding support by various levels of government, private sector partners, and additional not-for-profit organizations. This collaboration is at the heart of the Government of Canada's new **Framework**

**to Build a Green Prairie Economy.** The Framework was launched today after extensive consultations with Prairie stakeholders. It is a long-term commitment to work differently, through stronger coordination with and among federal departments on investments for the Prairies and closer collaboration with Prairie partners on their priorities for a prosperous and sustainable Prairie economy that leaves no one behind. PrairiesCan will dedicate \$100 million over three years to leverage and attract new investments and support projects aligned with five priorities identified in the consultations:

- Growing key regional sectors, including natural resources, agriculture, and manufacturing;
- Effective movement of goods, people, and information;
- Expanding and capitalizing on clean electricity;
- Community economic development; and,
- Economic reconciliation and inclusive growth.

This Framework is intended to encourage greater collaboration on investment opportunities, leverage additional funding, and attract new investments across the Prairies.

## Quotes

"Our government is making investments to help enable small- and medium-sized businesses across the Prairies to find and retain the skilled workers they need to grow and remain globally competitive. Today's investments are both the right thing to do and the smart thing to do—for the benefit of our economy as well as the youth and underrepresented Canadians who can now access vital skills training that leads to fulfilling, high-demand careers."

- ***The Honourable Dan Vandal, Minister for PrairiesCan***

"Small businesses make up 98% of Canadian small businesses and provide good jobs to workers across Alberta. Whether it's supporting budding farmers eager to embrace new technologies or collaborating with Indigenous youth who have a novel idea, today's announcement puts skills training and educational opportunities within reach and helps build an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable workforce for Alberta."


- ***The Honourable Randy Boissonnault, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages***

"Alberta's industries are taking off, and that means employers are looking for more skilled and talented workers to help keep their businesses growing. Work-integrated learning opportunities are a great way to prepare students for the workforce; they give learners the job-ready skills they need to launch successful careers when they graduate, right here in Alberta. I applaud NAIT and our post-secondary institutions for their commitment to build partnerships with industry, providing more WIL opportunities that will benefit all Albertans for years to come."

- ***The Honourable Rajan Sawhney, Minister of Advanced Education, Government of Alberta***

"We at Technology Alberta are pleased to be part of Alberta's innovation ecosystem that collaboratively has been supporting the growth of Alberta's small- and medium-sized tech companies - and helping address one of their top 3 stated needs - Access to Talent. Today's announced federal funding through PrairiesCan, together with the support from multiple ministries at the Government of Alberta, and the outstanding community of tech entrepreneurs across the province - has put Technology Alberta on course to deliver 750 work placements for Alberta post-secondary students and new graduates, helping grow Alberta's tech companies while creating Alberta jobs in areas including artificial intelligence, data visualization, social innovation, and more."

- ***Gail J. Powley, P.Eng - President, Technology Alberta***

"The Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (Cando) builds capacity in Indigenous community economic development by focusing on Canada's fastest growing demographic, Indigenous youth. Engaging with youth not only impacts them personally, but also creates incredible positive change in their communities. Cando is proud to partner with PrairiesCan in the development of the Indigenous Coaching Program and the Economic Development Youth Summit. Both programs work in tandem to teach and inspire Indigenous youth to pursue careers in economic development, business development and entrepreneurship. These programs wouldn't be possible without PrairiesCan's partnership." 

- ***Ray Wanuch, Executive Director, the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (Cando)***

"Regional economic growth and innovation require a different kind of talent, future-fit talent. It requires people with deep competence who can be as nimble as the businesses they are working with need to be. In addition, companies need to be able to find that talent, quickly, so they can take advantage of growth opportunities. Through this funding, InceptionU will work directly with Prairie companies to develop and match talent, so these companies thrive."

- ***Margo Purcell, CEO and CoFounder, InceptionU***

"As the co-chair of the Talent Development Task Force, I am thrilled to see our vision taking shape through strategic partnerships and funding support from PrairiesCan, Alberta Jobs, Economy & Trade, and Mitacs. Our core focus is to foster a robust culture of engagement, alignment, and coordination between Alberta's post-secondaries and the business community. This unique in Canada talent task force partnership is an Alberta-made solution to position the province for long term growth. We look forward to expanding the impact of our project in pursuit of our vision – for Alberta to lead North America in aligning post secondary training to the current and future needs of Alberta's business community."

- ***Shauna Feth, President and CEO, Alberta Chambers of Commerce***

## **Quick facts**

- PrairiesCan funding for 11 Alberta organizations is being provided through its Community Economic Development and Diversification program; the Jobs and Growth Fund; and the Regional Innovation Ecosystems program.
- The Community Economic Development and Diversification program supports economic development initiatives that contribute to the economic growth and diversification of communities across the Prairie provinces. Through this program, PrairiesCan enables communities to leverage their capacity and strengths to respond to economic development opportunities and adjust to changing and challenging economic circumstances.
- The Jobs and Growth Fund provides businesses and organizations with either interest-free loans or non-repayable funding to help job creators and the organizations that support them to prepare for growth, build resiliency, enhance competitiveness, and create jobs.
- The Regional Innovation Ecosystems program creates, grows, and nurtures inclusive regional ecosystems that support what businesses need to innovate from start to finish and an environment where companies can innovate, grow, and compete.
- *The Building a Green Prairie Economy Act*, based on the Private Members Bill C-235, championed by the late Honourable Jim Carr, received royal assent on December 15, 2022.
- The Honourable Dan Vandal, Minister for PrairiesCan, was named under the *Act* to lead extensive consultations across the Prairies to inform the development of a Framework to be tabled in Parliament one year after royal assent of the *Act*. The Framework was tabled on December 8, 2023.
- Progress reports will be tabled in Parliament in 2025 and every five years thereafter in accordance with the *Act*.

**Background:** Minister Boissonnault announces federal investments for inclusive learning and skills development in Alberta

PrairiesCan is investing over \$8.8 million for 11 projects in Alberta through several federal programs, including the Community Economic Development and Diversification program (CEDD); the Jobs and Growth Fund (JGF); and the Regional Innovation Ecosystems program (RIE). These investments are expected to support over 1,600 jobs and approximately 4,500 training opportunities.

Total PrairiesCan funding of \$8,807,705 for these 11 Alberta organizations is enabling inclusive youth learning supports and skills development for underrepresented groups such as Indigenous entrepreneurs, newcomers, and women.

### **Community Economic Development and Diversification program (CEDD) - \$1,534,324**

The CEDD program supports economic development initiatives that contribute to the economic growth and diversification of communities across the Prairie provinces. Through this program, PrairiesCan enables communities to leverage their capacity and strengths to respond to economic development opportunities and adjust to changing and challenging economic circumstances. Today, PrairiesCan announced CEDD support for two organizations:

- **Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (Cando) (\$184,324)**

Create a coaching program for Indigenous youth economic development officers, entrepreneurs, and business owners.

- **Momentum (\$1,350,000)**

Expand existing start-up business development programs, including those related to social enterprises, and increase access to these programs for underrepresented groups in the Calgary area.

### **Jobs and Growth Fund (JGF) - \$2,758,117**

The JGF is a \$700-million federal program to support regional job creation and position local economies for long-term growth. The Fund provides businesses and organizations with either interest-free loans or non-repayable funding to help job creators and the organizations that support them to prepare for growth, build resiliency, enhance competitiveness, and create jobs. Today, PrairiesCan announced JGF support for two organizations:

- **Community Futures Entre-Corp (\$407,050)**

Develop the Workforce Initiative South East (WISE) program to support underrepresented workers, including youth, women and new Canadians, to re-enter the workforce and find better career opportunities in growth sectors and emerging industries in southeast Alberta.

- **Technology Alberta (\$2,351,067)**

Develop and implement Phase II of the First Industrial Research, Science or Technology (FIRST) job placement program.

## **Regional Innovation Ecosystems program (RIE) - \$4,515,264**

The RIE program helps create, grow, and nurture inclusive regional ecosystems that support what business needs to innovate from start to finish. Through RIE, targeted investments in not-for-profit organizations support businesses in priority sectors to innovate, grow and compete globally. RIE also promotes inclusive growth by helping underrepresented groups more fully participate in the innovation economy. Today, PrairiesCan announced RIE support for seven organizations:

- **The A100 (incorporated as Alberta 100 Tech Entrepreneurs Inc.) (\$150,000)**

Develop a training program and platform to cultivate technical marketing and customer success talent for small- and medium-sized enterprise growth in Alberta. The new funding builds on PrairiesCan's previously announced funding of \$236,500 towards the program.

- **Alberta Chambers of Commerce (\$765,632)**

Improve labour market outcomes and support economic recovery through facilitating and coordinating with post-secondaries in Alberta.

- **Cybera Inc. (\$700,000)**

Grow data science talent for Alberta's small- and medium-sized firms through mentorship and work integrated learning that will provide aspiring data scientists with applied industry experience and hands-on training.

- **InceptionU (\$1,200,000)**

Develop and deliver a program for tech-transitioning talent that provides small- and medium-sized firms access to skilled labour to accelerate the growth of Alberta's digital technology sector.

- **Mindfuel Foundation (\$363,606)**

Support an early-stage entrepreneurship business training pilot that will bring promising young talent together with early ecosystem supporters and mentors. This new funding builds on PrairiesCan's previously announced funding of \$229,625 towards this project.

- **Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) (\$308,026)**

Create and deliver the Blue Book Program to provide students with the opportunity to move a business from ideation to launch.

- **Young Agrarians (\$1,028,000)**

Scale up the Young Agrarians Grow-A-Farmer Program to deliver specialized agriculture entrepreneurship programming, on-farm internship, business mentorship, and ecosystem capacity building to increase new and young people entering the sector, and enterprise-readiness for new farm entrepreneurs across the Prairies.

## **Associated links**

- [Prairies Economic Development Canada \(PrairiesCan\)](#)
- [Community Economic Development and Diversification program \(CEDD\)](#)
- [Jobs and Growth Fund \(JGF\)](#)
- [Regional Innovation Ecosystems program \(RIE\)](#)
- [Building a Green Prairie Economy](#)

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