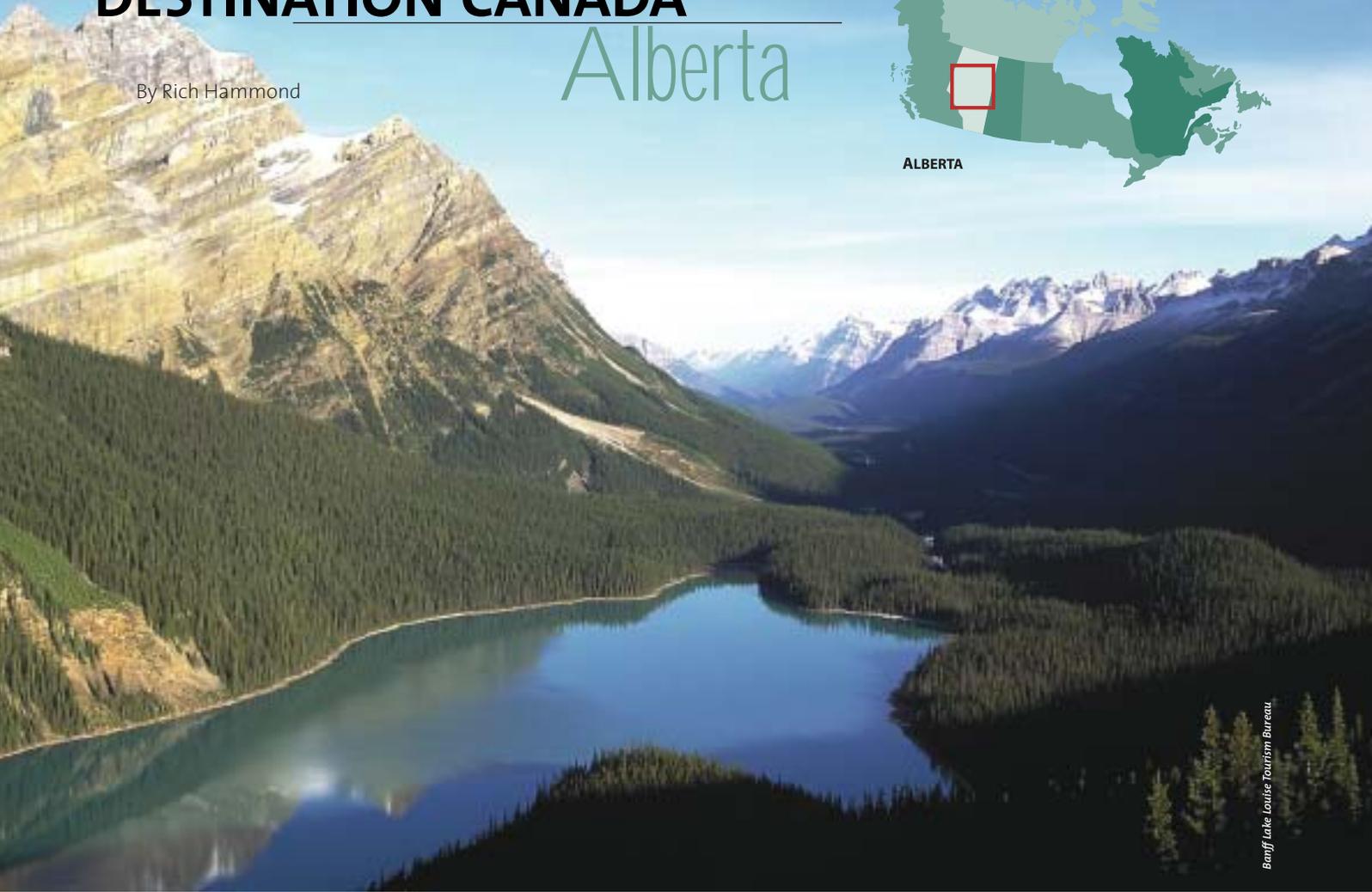


DESTINATION CANADA

By Rich Hammond

Alberta



Banff Lake Louise Tourism Bureau

In his 1972 classic, “Alberta Bound”, Gordon Lightfoot sang passionately of his longing to escape Toronto for the prairie lights, the Chinook wind and the Rocky Mountain sunset. An Ontarian by birth, Lightfoot clearly captured the essence of Alberta’s magnificence and multiplicity. From the land to the climate to the people, this is a place of vast diversity. Yet, there is a powerful sense of one-ness in Canada’s cowboy province: Albertans are universally passionate about their Wild Rose Country.

Alberta offers an astonishingly sweeping transition between the sprawling, golden prairies of Saskatchewan to the east and the skyscraping, snowcapped Rocky Mountains to the west. With the state of Montana on its southern border and the frosty North West Territories across its northern boundary, Alberta’s landlocked 661,185 square kilometres offer a multitude of rivers, lakes, streams and icy-blue glaciers—

plus enough land for cattle to grow, oil to gush and every Albertan to live the western dream. And for just a touch of pre-hysteria, in the province’s southern region, dinosaur enthusiasts can find some of the most important paleontological finds in the world.

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Connect Alberta's incongruent geography with its rich history, mysterious cultures and renowned tales of dinosaurs to buffalo, and you'll see why the United Nations bestowed Alberta with five of Canada's twelve designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Bring up Alberta in almost any corner of the globe and, invariably, world travelers are going to mention Banff and/or the Calgary Stampede—and the wildlife, in just about every sense of the term, good or bad. The exquisite town of Banff, a jewel in the heart of one of Canada's most famous national parks, has been luring tourists from all across Europe, North America and the Orient for decades.

Today, according to some, this once idyllic Rocky Mountain resort is overrun with tour buses and camera-wielding throngs outnumbering the herds of elk, and other wildlife usually wandering the streets oblivious to people, private property and traffic. Nonetheless, nestled in the valley of some of the mightiest peaks in the Rockies, Banff's picturesque charm is unmistakable from every angle, despite its bustling, and sometimes congested nature.

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Alberta

Destination Alberta

Photos: Banff Lake Louise Tourism Bureau

Down in the big city, the world-famous Calgary Stampede has been “the greatest outdoor show on earth” since 1886. From thrill rides to stacks of pancakes, cutting horses to high-tech light shows, rodeo daredevils to stage shows, chuck wagon races to displays of Alberta Agriculture and top name entertainment, the Calgary Stampede is ten days of non-stop riding, roping, whooping and hollering fun for all ages.

To say that Albertans are an outdoorsy bunch is more than obvious. The spectacular beauty of their province demands that residents and visitors alike get outside for a dizzying breath of real fresh air and close-to-nature excitement. And they do it often, no matter what the season. From Rocky mountain ski trails and glacier-fed lakes to Jasper’s Columbia ice fields and canyons, there is something very special and unique for hikers, campers and adventurers of every stripe—whether you like to experience it from a tent in the forest, a lakeside cabin or a luxurious suite on the shores of Lake Louise.

The foothills and prairies offer plenty of opportunities for “dudes” to earn saddle sores and work up a powerful hunger for a homegrown, home cooked Alberta grade A steak. Some have described Albertans as northern Texans, but don’t say that too loud in downtown Calgary or Medicine Hat—the boots are definitely bigger here.

Of course, the great outdoors is merely one—although large—facet of life in Alberta. The province’s cities and suburbs are as modern and well serviced as many major North American



Calgary
Stampede



GREATEST OUTDOOR SHOW ON EARTH



metropolitan centres. Calgary, the business centre in the south and Edmonton, the capital to the north, are the big engines behind Alberta's substantial wealth and impressive growth. And just like the great outdoors, business is explored and practiced with the same sense of bigness.

According to the Alberta Advantage, the province is blessed with an abundance of natural advantages such as energy reserves that fuel a thriving oil and gas industry and keep energy costs low; forest reserves that meet the needs of a growing forest products industry; plenty of excellent farm land for world-class agriculture production; and enough clean air and water, unmatched scenery, and culturally diverse communities to create a quality of life that is second to none.

Alberta's biggest business advantage of all is what it doesn't have much of—taxes. The provincial government sustains one of the lowest overall tax systems in Canada. No provincial sales tax, no provincial general capital tax, no provincial payroll tax, and no taxes on machinery and equipment. And, as if that isn't enough to encourage investors and entrepreneurs, by 2004, the province aims to reduce its general corporate income tax rate from the current 13.5% to 8%. With changes to the federal and provincial

tax regimes, Alberta will have one of the most vibrant and competitive business tax environments in North America.

Alberta has cooked up real economic growth averaging 4.6% over the past five years. Some of the province's successes include over \$54 billion in international goods and services exports; manufacturing shipments of \$35.3 billion; over \$52 billion in major capital projects; and the creation of 219,000 jobs between 1995 and 2000.

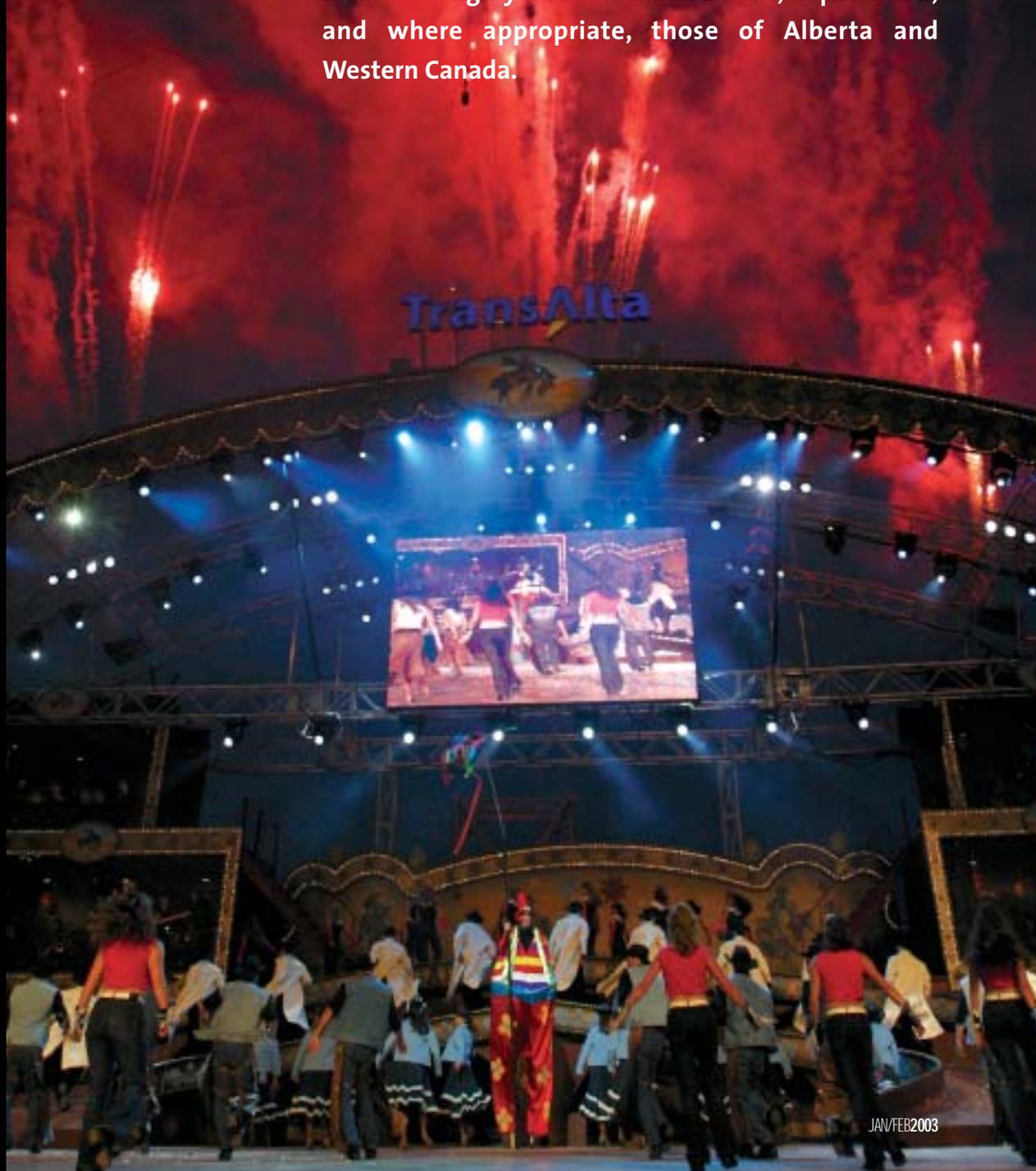
The success that Albertans enjoy today can be traced back to 1914 and the discovery of oil on a small farm in Turner Valley. Larger oil strikes in 1947 and 1949, along with the building of pipelines in the 1950s and 1960s, fueled the province's economy and boosted local expertise to worldwide proportions. Alberta's current oil and gas industry is recognized around the globe for its skill in dealing with temperature extremes, permafrost, muskeg and shipping oil and gas products over vast distances. Meeting these challenges meant that oil and gas companies had to continually develop new technologies for almost every aspect of energy development. As a result, Alberta businesses have become global experts in 3D geophysical survey methods, horizontal drilling, reservoir engineering, plus super-heavy oil and sour gas technologies.

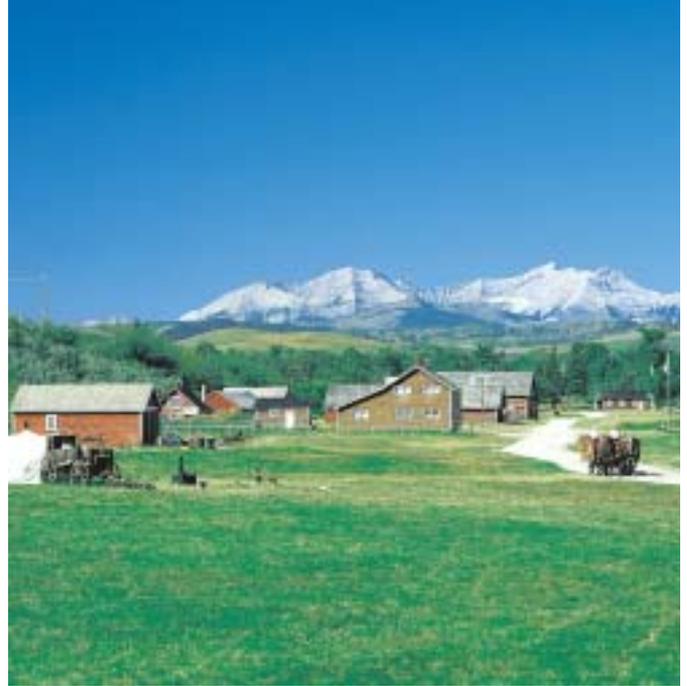
Photos: Calgary Stampede



Photos: Calgary Stampede

The basic purpose of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede is to preserve and enhance the agricultural and historical legacy of Alberta and to fulfill the appropriate aspects of the agricultural, trade, entertainment, sports, recreational and educational needs of Calgary and Southern Alberta, in particular, and where appropriate, those of Alberta and Western Canada.





Photos: Travel Alberta

Alberta's success in the oil and gas industry led to the creation, in 1976, of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund—an \$11.8 billion nest egg that the government has set aside for future generations of Albertans. The Heritage Fund has helped improve provincial infrastructure, promoted tourism, developed parks and recreational areas, enhanced Alberta's libraries and maintained forests. To quote the government of Alberta, "It's a lasting legacy with benefits that will remain for all Albertans in perpetuity."

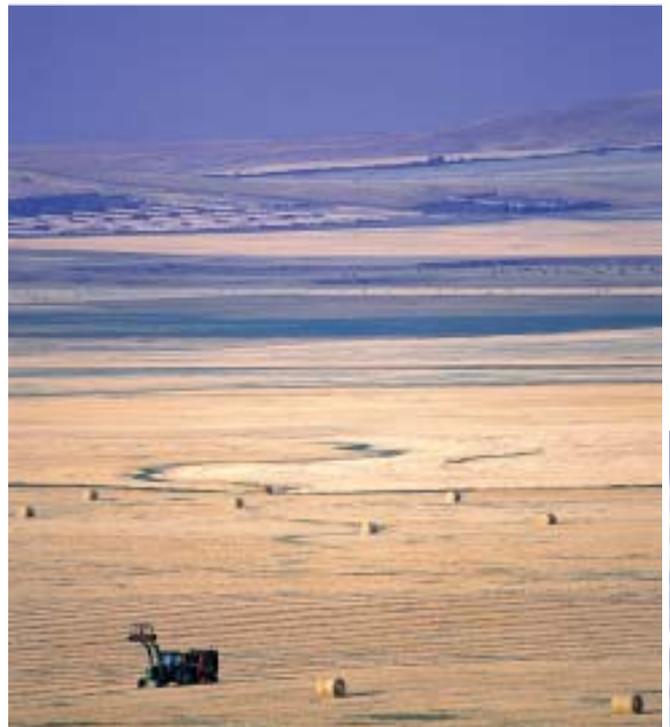
The province is just as productive on top of the land as it is underneath. With 52 million acres dedicated to crop and live-stock, Alberta produces massive supplies of grain, oilseeds, vegetables, sugar, dairy products and meat, including almost half of Canada's beef cattle. Since 1980, the province's food and beverage industry, which employs more than 19,000 people, has grown 5% annually to become Alberta's largest manufacturing sector. Since 1996, some of the biggest food processing companies have invested over \$1 billion in Alberta.

The agri-food processing industry enjoys exceptional circumstances unique to Alberta. Effective road, rail and air links to world markets have made this province a major distribution centre from which goods are shipped to western Canada (British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba), the Pacific and Northwestern United States, Pacific Asia and the Russian Far East. Hungry for even more growth, the government of Alberta offers assistance for entrepreneurs seeking alliance partners, joint ventures or sources of capital, as well as information and analysis for emerging investment projects.

Forestry is another dynamo of activity, providing Alberta with a major source of economic growth for more than twenty years. Alberta's forests cover 59% of the province's land area and include 2.2 billion cubic metres of growing stock. The province harvests about 23.3 million cubic metres annually and has moved from being a commodity lumber manufacturer to a diversified

sector making and exporting lumber, fibreboard, engineered building products such as beams and trusses, as well as prefabricated buildings, cabinets, furniture and much more.

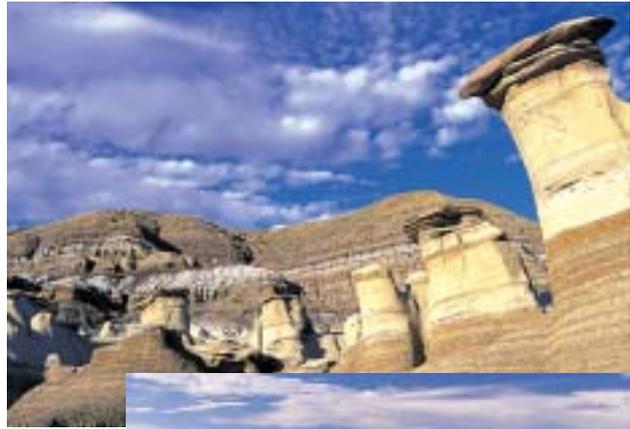
In high-tech areas, Alberta holds a long-standing reputation for world-class capability in the aerospace industry. One of the 60 companies offering a wide range of goods and services is Spar Aviation Services, which operates one of the only eleven certified C-130 Hercules service centres in the world from its Edmonton facilities. Other key players include Pratt and Whitney's turbo engine assembly plant, Field Aviation spare parts manufacturing and Raytheon Systems Canada aircraft radar services.



In a province enjoying the highest economic growth in Canada, especially with so much of that growth coming from the oil and forestry sectors, managing the environment is seen as a constant challenge as well as a great opportunity. With more than 800 companies skilled at prevention, conservation, reclamation, waste management and emergency response, Alberta has developed expertise in site clean-up and remediation, water treatment, recycling, hazardous waste treatment, clean fuel burning technologies and several other environmental areas.

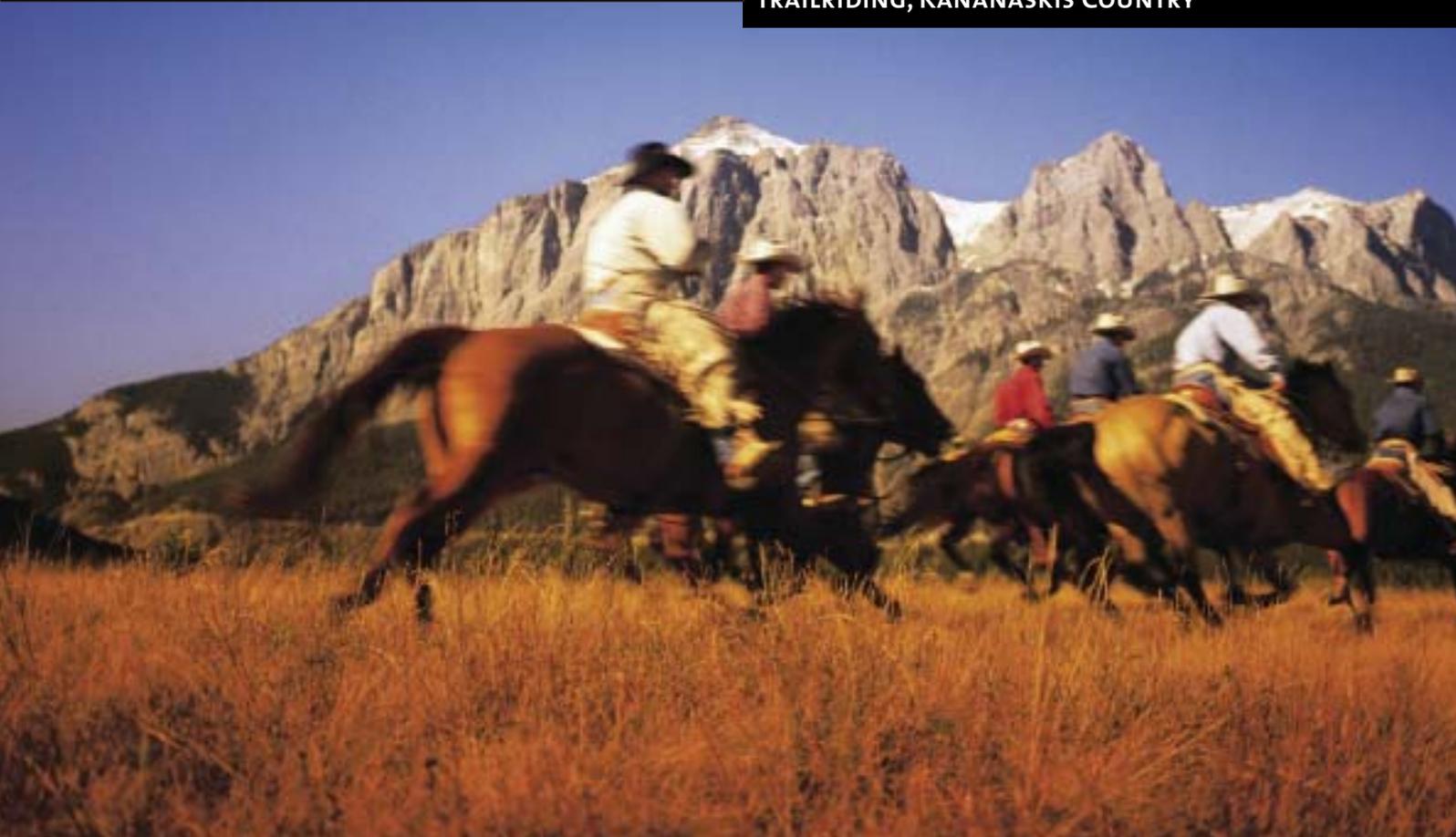
With the largest proportion of its population aged 25 to 44, the Alberta government has demonstrated its resolve by creating the Alberta Advantage, a set of economic, social, and natural factors designed to make Alberta an attractive location for families and businesses. The three core businesses of the provincial government relate to improving the quality of life for individuals and their families through the government's priorities for health, education, children, those in need, and aboriginal Albertans; protecting the quality of life in Alberta through the government's priorities for the economy, workforce and work places, infrastructure, value-added industries, export trade, and financial and fiscal position; and setting priorities for community safety, renewable resources, the environment, natural, historical and cultural resources, and Alberta's relations with other levels of government.

The benefits of the Alberta Advantage are evident: the strongest provincial economy in Canada, the highest standard of living of any province, the lowest unemployment



Photos: Travel Alberta

TRAILRIDING, KANANASKIS COUNTRY





rate in the country, the lowest overall taxes, the highest personal disposable incomes, among the highest life expectancies in the world, the best-educated workforce in Canada, and the lowest percentage of low-income households in Canada.

With only 5.6% unemployment, affordable housing, and among the lowest business operating costs in Canada, Alberta offers entrepreneurs and investors enormous opportunities. The provincial government's commitment to favourable tax incentives has made it clear that Alberta is open for business. The province's skilled and educated workforce delivers the highest worker productivity and productivity growth rate in the country. In 1999, almost half of the labour force reported holding a university degree or post-secondary certificate. And a footnote for high-tech companies: Alberta reports the highest number of engineers per capita with almost two for every 100 Albertans in the workforce.



While Alberta's business and housing boom of the 1970s may be a distant memory, the province and its 3.1 million residents are proving that imagination, hard work and a persistent pioneering spirit are important elements in solidifying a very bright future. Ask any Albertan about life in western Canada and you'll hear all about the vastness and beauty of the land, the determination and free-spirited nature of the people, and the single mindedness of a province moving ahead. They'll tell you that life is good in Alberta. They work hard, they play harder, they live well. And they'll probably agree that, even 30 years ago, Gordon Lightfoot was right when he wrote...

Photos: Travel Alberta





“Oh the prairie lights are burnin' bright
 The Chinook wind is a-movin' in
 Tomorrow night I'll be Alberta bound
 Though I've done the best I could
 My old luck ain't been so good and
 Tomorrow night I'll be Alberta bound
 No one-eyed man could e'er forget
 The Rocky Mountain sunset
 It's a pleasure just to be Alberta bound
 I long to see my next of kin
 To know what kind of shape they're in
 Tomorrow night I'll be Alberta bound.”

Gordon
 Lightfoot



Photo: Banff/Lake Louise Tourism Bureau



Photo: Banff Lake Louise Tourism Bureau