

NEWS

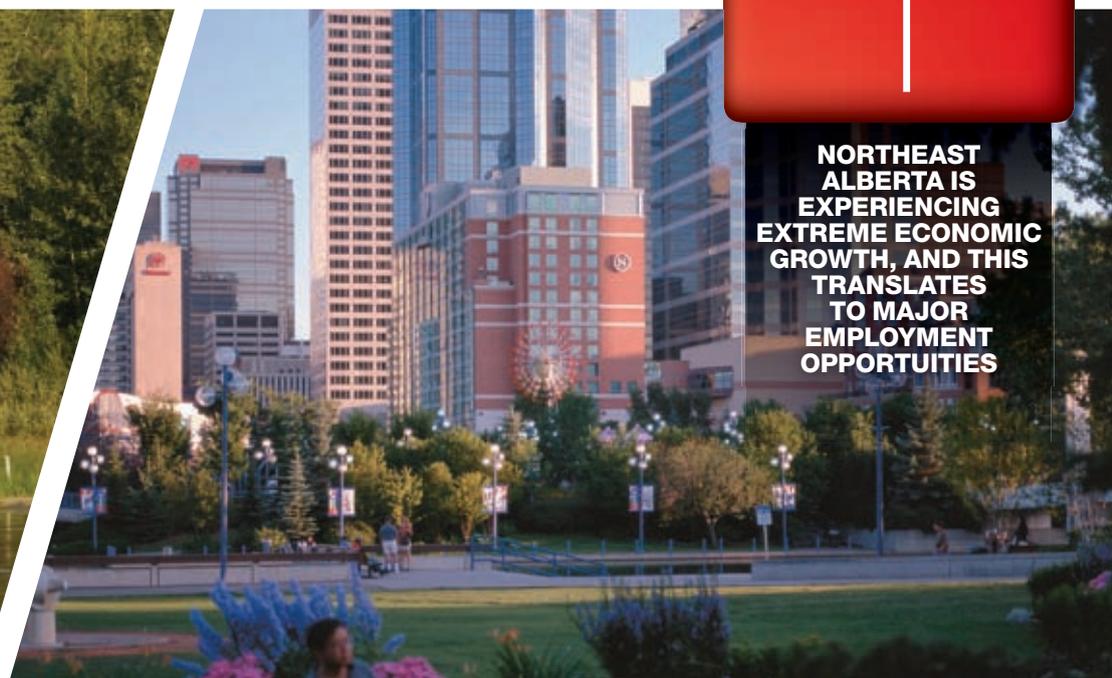
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NORTHEAST ALBERTA IS EXPERIENCING EXTREME ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND THIS TRANSLATES TO MAJOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS**

Experience the variety that this province has to offer.

PHOTO LEFT: ATHABASCA COUNTY; PHOTO RIGHT: CALGARY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Where big dreams become reality

Breanne Everett, the 28-year-old CEO of Orpyx Medical Technologies, is a new breed of Calgary entrepreneur. As a University of Calgary (U of C) plastic surgery resident in 2010, Everett created wearable sensor-based technologies such as pressure-sensitive insoles that communicate wirelessly so diabetic patients can monitor their peripheral neuropathy (numbness). “They refer to it as the gift of pain,” she said. The technology helps them know what they can’t feel, and prevent damage to their feet that can lead to amputation.

Start-up funding

The hunt for funding was on. “Obviously, Alberta is a very rich province,” said Everett. “I’ve noticed a palpable difference in how much more support there is now than when we started. There’s a growing mobile-app and incubator scene, and a growing interest in companies outside clean energy and high-tech. People are really starting to branch out and diversify their investments.”

The government has also built a slew of high-tech and bio-tech programs aimed at diversifying

beyond oil and gas. The bottom line: “We’ve really benefited from being in Alberta,” she said.

“Here, you have the ability to actually make a difference.”

—Walter Paszkowski,
County of Grande Prairie

Open skies, open minds

Everett is also completing her Executive MBA at U of C, and she and her husband recently purchased a bungalow on a half-acre in the city on the river for what she calls a reasonable sum.

“I’m part-way through my residency in plastic surgery, on my leave, doing all of this,” she said. “Having the support from the medical environment to do what I’ve been able to do, I’m very impressed with the open-mindedness. The general mentality in Calgary - the ability to dream and think big picture - has helped my career substantially.”

The opportunity hub

The Northern Alberta challenge is keeping up with change, because

things move fast.

“The opportunities are in the hubs,” said Brian Glavin, Economic Development Officer for the City of Grande Prairie. Cold Lake and Fort McMurray are the oil sands centres, while in Grande Prairie, the big one is natural gas, followed by forestry and agriculture.

Surf’s up!

The resource sector fuels professional jobs such as law, finance and accounting firms, and then there’s

big box retail and tourism.

A city of 55,000, Grande Prairie has all of the major big box stores, the award-winning L Spa, and the new 250,000-plus-square-foot Eastlink Centre with an indoor water park, an Olympic pool and surfing. Yes, Grande Prairie is home to one of only three surf machines in Canada.

Average income: \$126,877

A different kind of economics is afoot. Last year, the average household income for Grande Prairie was \$126,877, nearly 50 per cent above the national average, according to FP Markets Canadian Demographics.

“The average home price is about \$260,000 which is about double the average household income. Compare that to Vancouver, where the average home price is nearly 10 times the average annual income,” said Glavin.

Grande Prairie is also the most entrepreneurial city in Canada, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (Red Deer, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Lloydminster also made the top 10).

Career fast-track

“Most employers maintain a permanent sign: help wanted,” said Walter Paszkowski, Economic Development Officer for the County of



Breanne Everett
CEO, Orpyx Medical

Grande Prairie.

“Employment opportunities are often going to people who would need an extra 10 years’ experience to even be considered for the job in Vancouver or Toronto,” said Glavin. “You come in, prove yourself and work hard and you advance significantly faster than you will anywhere else in the county, probably at a much higher pay scale.” With that comes the excitement of being part of a rapidly growing community. “Here, you have the ability to actually make a difference,” said Paszkowski.

And with the long summer days, you can golf 18-holes after work and get home before dark.

PROFILE

Average home sales prices

(includes all types of homes)

Vancouver, BC

\$588,100

Calgary, AB

\$418,938

Cold Lake, AB

\$413,937

Grande Prairie, AB

\$262,781

INSPIRATION

HOME IS WHERE
THE HEART IS

Alberta is more than a place for the Vancouver Canucks' left-wing speedster Mason Raymond. It's a feeling of warmth and satisfaction, passion and drive, big skies and big cities, and a way of being that made it possible for him to become the hockey star he is today. "For me, it's home and will always be home," said Raymond, 27.

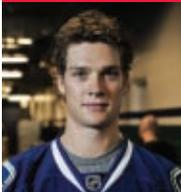
Small town perks

"I love the open spaces: the land and the trees and the topography, and everything it has to offer," he said. His family's cattle farm was on the edge of paradise in the Rocky Mountains foothills near the town of Cochrane, with all the horses, cows and backyard ice rinks an aspiring hockey player could dream of. "We had the asset of a big city with Calgary just 45 minutes away, but Cochrane had a small town feel. You really got to know people," he recalled.

And it's the people he loves - how they're down-to-earth, genuine, and even a little old-school.

"People there have a nice way of acting and going about their business — one that I would love to raise my family in"

PROFILE



Mason Raymond
Left Wing,
Vancouver
Canucks

Team: Vancouver Canucks

Position: Left-wing #21

Hometown: Cochrane, Alberta

Born: 17 September 1985

Salary: \$2.275 million

Known for: his lightning speed

Nickname: May-Ray

First hockey coach: his dad

Favourite food: Alberta beef

Spouse: Megan Raymond

Junior A hockey:

Camrose Kodiaks

Drafted: 2005 in the 2nd round, 51st by the Canucks

**Passion drives
the province**

When he played Junior A Hockey, he moved on to a different small town - Camrose, near Edmonton.

"I've met so many great people from those small towns I still keep in contact with today. Those are the people you meet and grow with and learn from," said Raymond. He remembers the passion of the fans. The cattle farmer who would come to the games in his cowboy hat. The people who worked all day and volunteered at night at the hockey games. They didn't take things for granted and they were always thinking of ways to help.

"People are passionate and that's what drives the province," said Raymond.

KIMBERLEY FEHR

editorial@mediaplanet.com



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PHOTO: JEFF VINNICK / VANCOUVER CANUCKS

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