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The Conference Board of Canada has added its voice to a growing chorus of think tanks and economists predicting economic recovery for Alberta in 2017.

In its fall provincial outlook, the Conference Board said Alberta will emerge from what has been one of the worst recessions to hit the province in decades in 2017, though economic recovery is likely to be modest.

"It appears that the worst may be over for Alberta, but the road to recovery won't be easy," said Marie-Christine Bernard, associate director, provincial forecast, the Conference Board of Canada. "Given the lower oil price environment, energy sector budgets are not expected to increase substantially over the next few years, capping the province's economic growth prospects at around 2 per cent at best."

Overall, Alberta can expect to see real GDP growth of 2.2 per cent in 2017, the report says. The rebuilding of fire-ravaged Fort McMurray is expected to kick into high gear this year, and will contribute 0.4 percentage points to real GDP growth in 2017, according to the forecast.

The Conference Board report states that the recent election in the U.S. offers fresh hope for getting more Canadian crude oil to markets, as the incoming Trump administration favours the Keystone XL pipeline. In addition, the federal government's approval of the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline is good news for Alberta's energy sector.

However, and despite the recent OPEC supply cut announcement, there remains a lot of oil in storage around the world. The Conference Board does not foresee the price of West Texas Intermediate going much above US $55 per barrel next year.

Other forecasters who are calling for Alberta's economy to begin recovering in 2017 include the Royal Bank of Canada, which expects the province's GDP to increase in the 2.0 to 2.5 per cent range, and ATB Financial, which is projecting a 2.1 per cent expansion.

Source: Calgary Sun, Amanda Stephenson
Our Women in Business Network will be presenting quarterly workshops for professional development and networking.

Our first event is promoted here and stay tuned for further workshops in the spring and fall! 2018 will see our 2nd Annual conference.

We look forward to connecting with you in 2017!

To join the WIB Network, email Wanda Compton at wcompton@brazeau.ab.ca.

No membership fee to join!

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**Know Your Business, Know Your Ideal Client**

*Women in Business Event*

Building on her popular Framing Your Future conference presentations, Darlis Collinge leads a fun, interactive workshop that teaches you how to authentically answer the question “What do you do?” Darlis teaches you a marketing approach focused on giving and being real, while learning your true nature and what your passion does for the people you serve.

**AGENDA**

- Breakfast
- Workshop
- Speed-Networking to practice new skills

**COST TO ATTEND**

$20 per person (plus GST) includes workshop, breakfast and door prizes.

**TO REGISTER**

Email Tamara London at tlondon@brazeau.ab.ca or call 780-542-7777. Visit www.brazeau.ab.ca for more information.

Deadline to register is February 9, 2017.
Harvesting Hemp: Seed to Sale Workshop Series

On Tuesday, January 17th, 2017 Brazeau County hosted a Harvesting Hemp workshop to explore the interest from producers, potential investors and manufacturing companies who are seizing commercial hemp opportunities to diversify their business and in turn diversify the economic landscape within the region. Attached is the workshop agenda for your reference.

Workshop #1 Harvesting Hemp
The response to our workshop was outstanding drawing 80 attendees ranging from farmers, investors, manufacturing companies, hemp operations, government, business supports services and those just curious on learning more about the opportunity in industrial hemp.

The afternoon had three presenters: Lori-Jo Graham, from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, Byron James, from InnoTechAlberta and Dan Madlung, CEO of BioComposites Group. Our speakers complimented each other, providing the detailed information required by a potential producer to make a sound business decision. But this is just the beginning. In addition to this first workshop which was about exploring the interest and educating on the opportunity, Administration is recommending two further workshops in this Seed to Sale series:

Workshop #2 Roadmap for Farmers/Producers - February
A 2 – 3 hour round table workshop. This will not be a formal presentation but rather an informal discussion. The workshop will focus on producers that want to explore adding hemp to their current crop rotation. Those attending will have a much better idea of how to start the application process, business, equipment needed, seed technologies, soils, harvesting for success, etc.

Workshop #3 Roadmap for Value-Add Commercialization - April
A 2 – 3 hour round table workshop. This will not be a formal presentation but rather an informal discussion. The workshop will focus on agri-value commercialization. Producers that want to explore adding value to their crops and others who want to use local crops as an input to produce value added products. Those attending will have a much better idea of how to start a business, the issues to consider, where to obtain funding, key success factors, etc.

To learn more or to register for an upcoming workshop contact Wanda Compton at wcompton@brazeau.ab.ca
INVITATION

MDP Charrette Event

April 25th - 28th, 2017

Join us each night April 25 - 28
Evening Session: 6 to 8 pm

HAVE YOUR SAY!

- Where should future residential growth be?
- Do you feel your community amenity needs are being met?
- How should the County encourage agricultural operations?

We want to know what issues you think are important for development in the County. We are hosting an MDP Charrette to hear from you! Help guide the future of Brazeau County.

RSVP

Email: mdp@brazeau.ab.ca

Facebook: /brazeaucounty
Visit our website: brazeau.ab.ca
CONSIDER HOW YOUR LIFE WOULD CHANGE IF YOU LOST YOUR WATER SUPPLY!

Working Well Workshop  
March 16th, 2017  
6 p.m. start  
Brazeau County Administration Office  
7401 Twp Rd 494  

Did you know that a poorly maintained water well can put your water supply at risk of contamination and reduce your well yield?  

If you are one of 450,000 Albertans who use their water well for household purposes, the key to ensuring your water supply is safe and secure is knowing how groundwater works, learning about your well and understanding how to properly maintain it.  

Proper water well siting, construction, maintenance and plugging will help protect your well from biofouling and contamination, save you costly repairs, and ensure your well water yields are sustained over many years.  

Find out what you can do to protect your well. Attend the FREE water well management workshop being hosted by Brazeau County, and presented by the Working Well Program, with technical expertise provided by Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Health Services and licensed water well drillers.  

During the workshop we will cover:  
• Groundwater – how it works  
• Water quality and quantity testing  
• Well protection – protecting your well from contamination  
• Basic well maintenance  
• Water sampling – how to do it  

To attend the workshop, please pre-register by calling Tara McGinn at the Brazeau County Administration Office: (780) 542-7777.
Come learn about ALUS!

WHAT: The Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program helps farmers and ranchers restore wetlands, reforest, plant windbreaks, install riparian buffers, create pollinator habitat and establish other ecologically beneficial projects on their properties. What’s more, ALUS not only assists producers with establishment costs, it also provides annual payments to ensure the ongoing stewardship of each ALUS project.

WHERE: Look for Brazeau County staff at the following event: Open House/Workshop at the Funnell Community Hall 6 pm to 9 pm - March 9, 2017

ALUS applications are always welcome. Contact the County at 780-542-2667, email us at: ALUS@brazeau.ab.ca or visit www.brazeau.ab.ca for an Expression of Interest form.
**Upcoming Workshops**

**SHIFTING TO AN ENERGY EFFICIENT ECONOMY IN ALBERTA**

Tuesday, February 28th  
9am to 4pm  
Clean Energy Technology Centre  
Drayton Valley, AB

This one day workshop will provide an opportunity to gain first hand knowledge of energy efficiency programs and the carbon tax levy. Learn how to take advantage of the rebates and incentives available through energy efficiency programs. Gain awareness of the different energy policies being implementing throughout the Province.

Registration $129 +GST, Lunch Included  
Register Online at www.eventbrite.ca  
Full Agenda Available at www.cetc-dv.com  
Questions? Contact Khalid at 780-514-2387

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**Participate in ALL of this for only $1000!**

- 8 months of education (online & in-person)  
- Accelerated planning with the Business Coaching Den  
- Access to a professional Mentor  
- 1-on-1 time with experts & successful women ag-entrepreneurs

For more information and to register: www.agfoodcouncil.com/s4wag2017/
Agritourism and Farm Direct Marketing Workshop

Featuring
Mark and Angela Grant Saunders of Saunders Farm
9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.; February 28, 2017
100, 5401 - 1 Avenue South, Lethbridge, Alberta (Agriculture Centre)

Cost: $25 (plus GST)
(includes lunch and refreshments)
To register call the Ag-Info Centre at
1-800-387-6030

Registration Deadline is February 21, 2017.
For further information about the workshop contact Colin Gosselin at 780-968-3518 or colin.gosselin@gov.ab.ca

Mark and Angela will guide participants through this hands on agritourism and farm direct marketing workshop. They will help farms leave with tangible ideas and plans for their businesses.

Topics Include

- Customer Service
- Staff Management and Training
- Pricing for Profit and Sustainability
- Marketing
- Products (farm dinners, events etc.)

Mark and Angela lead the award-winning Saunders Farm near Ottawa, Ontario. Originally a strawberry U-pick operation, the farm has grown and redefined what a family farm can be. They have had over one million guests, and now welcome nearly 60,000 people each year to their Haunting Season. Mark and Angela are also active leaders with the North American Farmers’ Direct Marketing Association.
Canadian Drillers Brave Deep Freeze as Oil Patch Revives Growth

(Bloomberg) In the snowy prairies of Western Canada, not even temperatures below -40 degrees have stopped Stampede Drilling Ltd.’s 60 recently rehired workers from manning the oil-service provider’s rigs after a nine-month dry spell for the business.

“Once oil hit $50, everybody started phoning again," Bill Devins, the drilling company’s 57-year-old owner, said in a phone interview from his office in Estevan, Saskatchewan, a town bordering North Dakota right at the heart of the Bakken shale formation. “We started to have some activity come our way.”

From the tight-oil plays of Saskatchewan to the oil sands of northern Alberta, Canada’s energy producers are returning to growth mode after more than two years enduring the worst market rout in decades. They are leaner and more efficient after cutting staff, shelving projects and reducing costs since the downturn. Cheaper crude doesn’t feel so painful any longer.

Companies such as MEG Energy Corp., Canadian Natural Resource Ltd., Cenovus Energy Inc., Encana Corp. and Seven Generations Energy Ltd. have all announced plans to expand production. Calgary-based Precision Drilling Corp. hired and recalled about 1,000 field workers to reactivate rigs in Canada and the U.S.

The renewed focus on expansion happens as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries cuts output and after the Canadian government in November approved construction of two expanded oil pipelines that will add almost a million barrels a day of export capacity to Western Canada.

‘More Comfortable’

“A lot of companies have started increasing capital budgets,” Amir Arif, a Calgary-based analyst at Cormark Securities Inc., said by phone. “They are getting more comfortable in the $45 to $60 oil world. The stability in the oil price is a key factor.”

Crude has rallied on the back of the OPEC-led supply cuts, trading mostly above $50 a barrel in New York since a Nov. 30 agreement. While that’s nothing like the industry’s heyday years of about $100 before the crash, it’s a big improvement from the near-$25 doldrums of a year ago.

MEG plans to spend C$590 million ($446 million) in operations this year, almost five times more than in 2016, as it expands production at the Christina Lakes oil-sands site by about 25 percent. Cenovus will proceed with a 50,000-barrel-a-day expansion of its own Christina Lake project and Canadian Natural is moving ahead with its 40,000-barrel-a-day Kirby North project. The three ventures represent the first oil-sands expansions to be announced since the downturn began.
Economic Rebound

The rosier outlook is filtering into Western Canada. Alberta’s economy will grow 2.1 percent this year, tying with British Columbia for second-fastest among Canadian provinces behind Ontario’s 2.3 percent, according to the median of forecasts compiled by Bloomberg. The growth follows two straight years of economic contraction in the oil-rich province and will be largely due to the rebuilding of Fort McMurray, the gateway to the oil sands that was devastated by wildfires last year. Saskatchewan, the country’s second-largest oil producing province, will also emerge from a two-year recession to grow 1.7 percent.

Oil companies that form the backbone of the Western Canadian economy cut capital spending 50 percent in the past two years to C$17 billion in 2016, according to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers projections. About 110,000 jobs were lost between late 2014 and April of last year, CAPP said. The number of rigs drilling for oil and natural gas in Canada has jumped almost 40 percent from a year ago, after falling to the lowest since the early 1990s last year, according to data from Baker Hughes Inc.

To be sure, the economy is only beginning to recover. In Alberta, holder of the world’s third-largest crude reserves, the unemployment rate dropped to 8.5 percent last month from 9 percent in November, the highest in more than 20 years.

Empty Offices

In Calgary, the province’s biggest city and the headquarters for most Canadian energy companies, almost 25 percent of office space was vacant in the third quarter, according to New York-based Cushman & Wakefield, a real estate service company. Vacancies are going to rise to as high as 30 percent by 2018 as downtown office buildings such as Brookfield Place and Teles Sky open their doors, Stuart Barron, the company’s Toronto-based national director of research, said by phone.

“There is more optimism but the market is not going to turn around on a dime,” he said. “It’s going to take another year or two to see strengthening.”

For oil companies, a return to the days when 200,000-barrel-a-day new oil-sands projects were routine is unlikely, Stephen Kallir, Canada upstream research analyst at Wood Mackenzie Ltd., said by phone. Most oil-sands expansions announced in recent months were projects that had already had capital invested in them, he said. Energy companies in Canada may also focus more on shale plays, where investment returns are realized more quickly than in the oil sands.

‘Prudent Approach’

“The aftershock and, for lack of a better word, hangover of the past two years is going to linger for quite a while in terms of how capital spending decisions are made,” he said. “There is going to be a lot more prudent approach.”

Much of the growth will be concentrated in Saskatchewan, where a less challenging geology means more wells will be tapped this year than in Alberta, according to the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors and Petroleum Services Association of Canada. That’s good news for Stampede’s Devins, who’s watched people move away and local businesses close up including a Staples and a motel. The new year has started out good.

“It’s probably as active as we’ve seen in two years for sure,” he said.

By : EnergyNow Media

Resources for Small Business

Alberta Government Small Business Resources smallbusiness.alberta.ca
Agriculture Growing Forward www.growingforward.alberta.ca
Community Futures Capital Region http://capitalregion.albertacf.com
Futurpreneur Canada www.futurpreneur.ca
Innovation & Technology http://www.albertatechfutures.ca
The Business Link http://businesslink.ca

Small Business Resources on Brazeau County website!
Grants & funding resources go to www.brazeau.ab.ca/business/business-and-industry-links
Do you have a good news announcement to share with us?

- New product development?
- New export opportunity?
- Milestone to celebrate?

Let us know and we will print it in the next Brazeau Business News which is mailed to every business in Brazeau County.

Please send us your story by email to wcompton@brazeau.ab.ca or call 780-542-7777.