

2017 EDSON BUSINESS VISITATION STUDY



Winter 2017

Presented by Community Futures West
Yellowhead

Community Futures West Yellowhead

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Business owners in the community of Edson

Western Economic Diversification

Board of Directors and staff of Community Futures West Yellowhead

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Executive Summary

The Edson Business Visitation Study marks the final visitation study in a series of five completed by Community Futures West Yellowhead. Community Futures West Yellowhead¹ is a nonprofit business support organization that focuses on enriching entrepreneurship within West Yellowhead, Alberta.

The Edson Business Visitation Study is divided into five key economic and community factors.

Key sections identified in the survey:

- Part A - “Type of Business”
- Part B - “Questions on Labour”
- Part C - “ Business Conditions and Local Trends”
- Part D - “Future Business Plans”
- Part E - “Informational and Community Factors”

The Edson Business Visitation study was comprised of a 26-question survey completed in person with local business owners and managers. The survey was distributed across the business community of Edson and attention was paid to capture information from a sample of all local industries. The opportunity to connect with local business is an important step in establishing a link between economic development partners and the business community. The Edson business license list was provided to Community Futures West Yellowhead to assist with capturing the most accurate study sample size. Municipal councilors, administration and community partners of Edson were provided input for topics of consideration for the study, to produce a document that captures the most useful community information. Edson has the largest of the West Yellowhead business communities with over 700 issued licenses. Through investigative research Community Futures determined that a number of businesses had been closed over the past year and a portion of those businesses that were operational did not have day to day presence in the community. 611 businesses were identified as being operational and having a daily presence in the community.

The style of business visitation studies that Community Futures West Yellowhead completes involves interviewing businesses with a day to day presence in the community, producing a data source of local businesses with the most impact on the community. The face to face style interview is completed with the owner or manager to ensure the utmost in accuracy of the information collected. Due to the face to face interview style Community Futures West

¹ For more information on Community Futures West Yellowhead and direct client services please visit www.westyellowhead.albertacf.com.

Yellowhead has had significant success in gathering substantial data in this study as well as previous business visitation studies throughout the West Yellowhead. 300 businesses received face to face interviews making this study the largest yet completed by Community Futures. 49% of the businesses community were interviewed with the study and their responses to the survey are contained within this document.

The Edson business community is primarily made up of small to medium sized businesses, and includes a significant number of micro businesses². The Edson Business Visitation Study did not interview many home-based businesses as they do not have a strong presence in the business license list provided by the town of Edson³. Edson businesses are primarily open year-round, with only a few businesses closing due to seasonal conditions. Most businesses said that they are significantly busier in the spring and summer months due to increased traffic levels along the highway 16 corridor. Businesses within the community are highly impacted by the oil and gas sector (primary sector), and notably the food service and accommodation sector relies heavily on the influx of workers affecting their growth in the community. Edson has an established downtown retail core and a few outlining box stores, as well as a strong professional services sector. Both sectors serve the greater Yellowhead County area with Edson acting as an industry hub for the surrounding hamlets.

The Edson Business Visitation Study is meant to be a snapshot in time looking at the challenges and opportunities of doing business within the community of Edson. For more information on Community Futures, the business visitation process or other regional studies please visit www.westyellowhead.albertacf.com.

² Micro businesses are generally defined as a small business employing nine people or fewer; small businesses are defined by having 15 or fewer employees, medium businesses are defined as businesses having 10-50 employees.

³ Home based businesses within Edson make up only a very small portion of the number of licensed businesses within the community. To learn more about this sector of entrepreneurs, Community Futures recommends consulting the 2016 Canadian Census.

Community Background

The town of Edson is located within West Central Alberta, within the boundaries of Yellowhead County. The community is 192 kilometers west of Edmonton along the Yellowhead Highway and 10 kilometers east of the highway 16 and highway 47 intersection.

Named after the Vice President of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, Edson Joseph Chamberlin, the community of Edson was established in 1911. With a population of 8,414,⁴ Edson is the second largest municipality within the West Yellowhead region. Edson is home to Canada's largest Slo-Pitch tournament, the annual Kinsman Slo-Pitch ball tournament, introducing a temporary increase of thousands of athletes into the town every summer.

Edson Business Community Facts:

- The average Edson resident is between the ages of 25 and 39, which aligns well with the age of the average Canadian entrepreneur⁵ and bodes well for entrepreneurship within the community.
- 97.1%⁶ of the businesses located within Edson are classified as small businesses, meaning they employ under 25 people.
- 77 businesses are reported as being incorporated, this number compared to the number of businesses (both numbers from 2015) indicate that there are a large number of sole proprietors, contractors and partnerships within the community, speaking to the entrepreneurial spirit within the community.
- In 2015 the building permits totaled \$5.7 million up 0.48% since 2014, with \$331.2 million largely due to the new hospital that opened in 2016 within the community⁷.
- The median family income in 2013 in Edson is \$103,640.
- The main industries that drive the local economy are resource based and include coal, oil and natural gas and forestry products.
- Major employers in the area include Cardinal River Coal, Weyerhaeuser and Sundance Forest Industries.

⁴ <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=4814024&Geo2=PR&Code2=01&Data=Count&SearchText=edson&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=&TABID=1>

⁵ The average age of Canadian entrepreneurs is 39 years of age, [https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/vwapj/SEC-EEC_eng.pdf/\\$file/SEC-EEC_eng.pdf](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/vwapj/SEC-EEC_eng.pdf/$file/SEC-EEC_eng.pdf).

⁶ <http://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/edson/#/>

⁷ <http://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/edson/major-projects/#/?from=2011&to=2015>

Purpose of Study

The main goals of this Business Visitation Study are:

- To identify major and regional community themes that are impacting rural business
- Contribute to the local economy by developing data that is current and relevant to community economic development goals
- Facilitate the gathering of data that can lead to effective strategic planning for community economic development and new businesses
- Understand and address urgent business issues through action
- Act as a business attraction strategy
- Increase communications between business support organizations and the business community
- Build recommendations for future implementation in Edson, Alberta.

The Business Visitation Study determines the needs and opportunities for business growth in the community through a systematic approach. It creates research and information that partners with community engagement to address community needs and opportunities.

Business retention and expansion information gathering is a community economic development tool used to encourage growth and stability for existing businesses. Community Futures West Yellowhead Business Visitation Studies incorporate structured informational gathering that serves as a mechanism to build dialog with local business with the aim to identify issues, goals and potential opportunities. The data collected is crucial to the sustainability and vitality of rural communities.

Five sections were developed based on community discussions and then a survey designed to capture a snapshot developing benchmark information, outline priorities and gain feedback from local businesses in Edson. These questions focused on topics including: business statistics, questions on labour and resources, local conditions and trends, future business plans and community satisfaction factors.

In total 26 questions, some featuring multiple parts, were developed for the study. Questions having multiple choice options were modelled after information from the Economic Developers Association of Alberta and encouraged the business owners to offer feedback and solutions to their identified challenges. While it is not the intention to compare and contrast the information collected from the individual communities against each other, some of the questions are consistent between all of the West Yellowhead communities. A total of 300 business interviews took place in the fall of 2016 and the Business Visitations Coordinator, Morgan Roberts, sat with

business owners and operators at their place of business recording responses. Data entry for the Edson Business Visitation study was completed by the Hinton and Jasper offices of Grande Prairie Regional College.

The information collected is intended to build dialog with local businesses with the aim to identify issues, goals and potential opportunities. The Edson Business Visitation Study findings are available to the community and have been intended to be treated as a community document. The study findings appear on the Community Futures West Yellowhead's web page, www.westyellowhead.albertacf.com.

Community Futures West Yellowhead

Community Futures West Yellowhead is an independently operated, non-profit organization funded by the federal government's department of Western Economic Diversification. Currently, there are 268 Community Futures offices in Canada including 27 offices in Alberta that support rural economic development by providing new or existing businesses the tools and resources they need to succeed. Established in 1985, Community Futures has helped over 114,000 entrepreneurs and invested over \$3.9 billion into the rural economy of Canada.

Community Futures is the only organization throughout rural Alberta with a mandate for business and community economic development. In 2013, 27 offices in Alberta made over 500 loans totaling \$26 million dollars, leveraging a further \$25 million which helped create or maintain nearly 1,600 jobs. Community Futures West Yellowhead has a proven track record that shows that business clients grow faster and last longer than businesses started with other traditional source financing, due to the mentoring relationship between the organization and the entrepreneur.

The Edson Business Visitation Study is the fifth and final BRE⁸ study to be completed by the organization. In 2014, studies were completed on both Jasper and Grande Cache, Alberta. In 2015 / 2016 studies were completed in Hinton and Yellowhead County. Community Futures has now completed a Business Visitation Study in each of the West Yellowhead communities that it serves. To view these studies please visit the 'Business Visitation Studies' page on Community Futures West Yellowhead webpage.

The Business Visitation Program designed by Community Futures West Yellowhead has produced award winning material focused on rural Alberta communities. The Business Visitation Study series has interviewed over 1,000 regional entrepreneurs within the West Yellowhead and follows their journey for two consecutive years. The Jasper Business Visitation Study project was recognized at the Jasper Park Chamber of Commerce, during the Small Business Awards Gala and resulted in CFWY receiving 'Non Profit Business of the Year' for 2014. The set of studies was also recognized at the provincial level, with the Business Visitation Coordinator presenting as a panelist at the 2014 Economic Developers of Alberta association provincial conference regarding the success of the project. In 2015 the Hinton Business Visitation Study was nominated for the 'Business Innovation Award' at the Hinton and District Chamber of Commerce's Small Business Awards Gala.

Community Futures West Yellowhead works in the communities of Jasper, Hinton, Edson, Grande Cache and Yellowhead County. Governed by a board of 10 directors with two representatives from each municipality, the main office is located in Hinton, Alberta. For more information regarding Community Futures West Yellowhead please visit www.westyellowhead.albertacf.com.

⁸ Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) is a structured action oriented community based approach to business and economic development.

Methodology

The Edson Business Visitation Study was distributed across the business community of Edson in fall 2016. Community Futures West Yellowhead and their partners recognize that the opportunity to connect with local business is an important step in establishing a link between economic development partners and the business community.

For Edson this is the first time a community wide Business Visitation Study has been completed. Smaller more focused studies have been completed over the years funded by the municipality regarding specific topics, but nothing as broad or reaching as the Edson Business Visitation Study has been attempted focusing on the local business market.

According to the active business license list provided by the town of Edson, there are over 700 active businesses registered within the community, making Edson's business community the largest within the West Yellowhead region. As in most communities of this size, this list is inflated by a number of businesses that do not have a local presence but from time to time operate in the area. Our study focused on those businesses with an active presence in the community and primarily storefront or industrial businesses were interviewed for ease of accessibility. A number of vacant store fronts have appeared in Edson over the last year, and through further research and community engagement it was found that a number of 611 active businesses was a more accurate indication of the current local business market. Home based businesses were interviewed with the study, however they only make up a small portion of the Edson business license list and have been graphed via industry with the other local businesses. It was apparent through the study that there are more home based businesses in the community than indicated by the active business license list. This is apparent with local advertising including poster boards, social media, local farmers market and word of mouth. This is a potential area for new business growth moving forward.

A total of 300 businesses were interviewed with the 2017 Edson Business Visitation Study via face to face interviews in fall of 2016. Community wide results provide a margin of error no greater than -3.8% at the 95% confidence level or 19 times out of 20.

The 2017 Edson Business Visitation study is an asset to the community brought forth by a community non -profit organization. It provides business owners with the confidence to speak freely, that they may not feel when dealing directly with the municipality or stakeholder organization.

Through informational sessions with key Edson representatives, Community Futures West Yellowhead created a well-rounded set of questions to interview the business community, resulting in an accurate assessment of their current and projected needs. The study produced an informative look into doing business in the community of Edson through the eyes of local business people.

The Edson Business Visitation Study focused on these five key factors:

- Part A: ‘Type of Business’: owner specific information including length of ownership, business land use, corporate headquarters, industry, and business acquisition.
- Part B: ‘Questions on Labour’: employee demographics, temporary foreign workers, training opportunities, and recruitment and retention.
- Part C: ‘Business Conditions and Local Trends’: increases / decreases in profitability over the last two years, 2015 customers’ origin, minimum wage increases, and new emerging technology.
- Part D: ‘Future Business Plans’: an in-depth look at any potential challenges to renovation and expansion and predictions on future business for the next two years.
- Part E: ‘Informational and Community Factors’: barriers to growth in the community, suppliers and businesses to attract to the community, Chamber initiatives, and community factors.

Full survey documents are provided in *Appendix A*.

Taking part in the interview session was optional, but most businesses saw the value in having their thoughts and concerns heard and presented. Most businesses who declined to participate simply did not have time to complete the interview. This study was confidential and comments and feedback have not been accredited back to their source, but rather by NAICS ⁹code and industry. Community Futures West Yellowhead felt that this allowed the business community to be honest and upfront about challenges and gaps in their field while producing an accurate snapshot via industry.

When planning the best timeline for the study, Community Futures West Yellowhead discussed potential timelines with residents and found that Edson business owners often take time off over the summer months, and are often too busy to complete a sit-down interview during the month surrounding the Kinsman Slow Pitch Tournament. Interviews for the study primarily took place in the fall of 2016, with some businesses requiring multiple visits to capture information from the most appropriate person. Multiple attempts to visit businesses happened throughout the different business sectors to ensure an accurate sample size of each of the main industries would be represented in the study. The goal was to minimize the impact on participants and keep interview times as brief as possible. Most interviews took between 10-20 minutes to complete and

⁹ The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) classifies business establishments for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing statistical data related to the North American economy.

businesses had the option to have multiple sit-down interviews if that worked better for them. Almost all of the interviews took place in a face to face interview style at the participant's place of business. Community Futures West Yellowhead has found that this method provides the most accurate results and feedback. A handful of interviews were completed over the telephone during the same period.

Project Timeline

Elements:	Action:	Resources:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Meet with key collaborates -Determine a sample size (300 businesses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Engage stakeholders -Identify opportunities through discussion and presentation feedback -Train staff on analytical and reporting data procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CFWY, Chamber of Commerce, CAO / Communications department town of Edson and Town Councilors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop marketing for the Edson Business Visitation Study -Start discussions with Key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop information package for distribution -Distribute to the local business community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CFWY programming resources -Economic Development Association of Alberta -Town of Edson business license list
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop informational interview gathering tool, BRE survey -26 Questions, combination of open ended and multiple choice, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Acquire points of interest from stakeholders -Compile industry specific questions -Format Edson specific information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Economic Development Association of Alberta -Roberts Consulting -Grande Prairie Regional College -The Executive Assistant (TEA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Conduct survey interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Information gathering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CFWY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Record results -Analyze findings of surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provide accurate data input into various required sources to fulfil contract and reporting requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Edson Communications Department -Economic Development Association of Alberta -GPRC Jasper & Hinton
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop presentation materials and preliminary findings -Present findings to CFWY Board of Directors, Town Council, Chamber of Commerce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create executive summary and information packages based on study preliminary findings -Create slideshow information and tools to aid in various presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CFWY board of directors -Town of Edson Council and administration -Chamber of Commerce
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Compile full study based on findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Construct final study document and distribute to the Edson community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CFWY board of directors -CFWY General Manager

Survey Participation

For our study's purposes, Community Futures West Yellowhead looked to take a sample of each of the main industries in the community, as well as a variety of small, medium and large sized businesses. Interviews were held with sole-proprietors as well as large corporations, providing the same respect and opportunity for feedback. Throughout the following sections Community Futures introduces a number of business factors, many presented by industry and as a full business community.

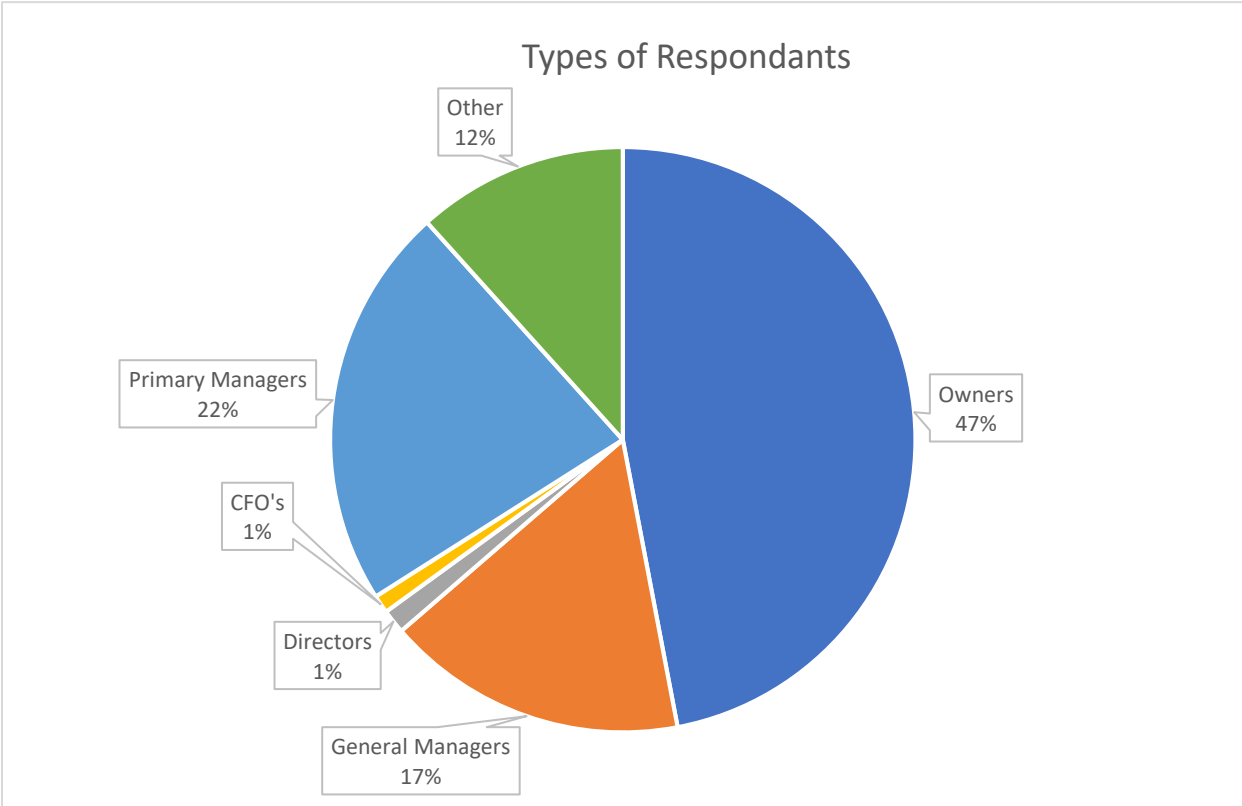
Referencing the active business license list provided by the town of Edson, the Edson business visitation study was able to interview 49% of the active businesses within the community. Upon starting the interview process Community Futures had a target of 250 businesses to complete the informational interview. Through discussions with stakeholders and further analysis of the community's business sector makeup it was determined that the goal would be set to interview 300 local businesses. A total of 300 Edson businesses were interviewed in the fall of 2016.

Key Findings

2.1 Type of Business (Part A)

For our Edson Business Visitation Study, CFWY took great measures to get the information from the right person; this often meant multiple visits to businesses to catch the owner or general manager and a heightened awareness of interview time. Businesses in Edson are spread out across the community with a central downtown core and industrial areas towards the outskirts of the community. Each interview took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete the survey. Some businesses choose to provide extensive feedback and comments going beyond the 15 minute mark. 88% of respondents were business owners, presidents, CEO's, directors or primary / general managers.

Figure 1: Types of Respondents n=300



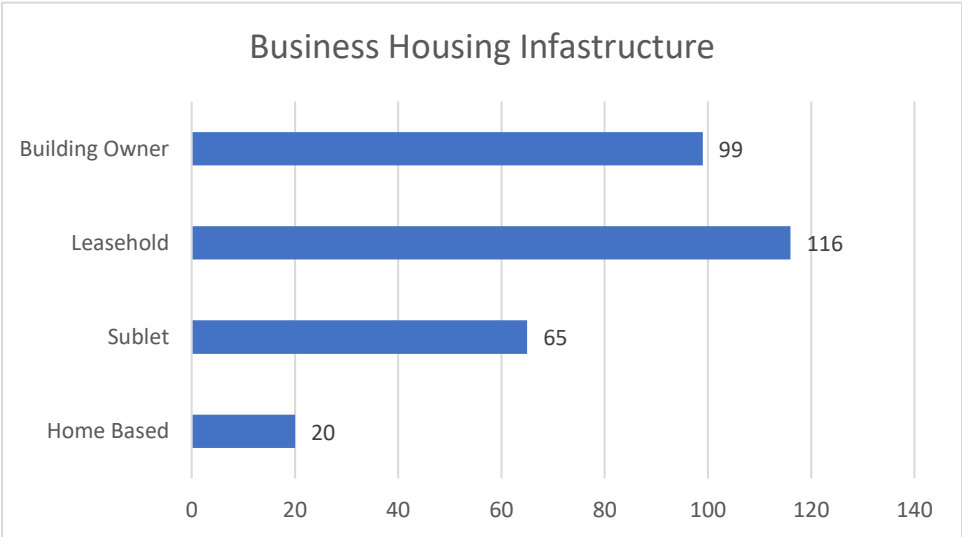
Businesses were asked about their business housing situation; whether they owned the building, operated in a leasehold situation, sublet or operated from their homes. As presented in Figure 2, the majority of Edson businesses operate in a leased space. A substantial portion of Edson's commercial real estate is owned by long term business people in Edson, some properties are now being managed by their next generation. Some business owners, particularly in oil and gas,

manufacturing and construction industries, expressed that if there were more affordable options that they would like to purchase a building or shop.

Some business owners in the retail sector expressed that they would likely never be able to afford to purchase the space that they currently lease. Younger entrepreneurs often made comments about not being able to break into the local commercial real estate market due to a monopoly situation of older generation commercial property owners.

The number of licensed home based businesses in Edson is approximately 45. This number is significantly lower than the number of home based businesses found through online research. It appears that there are likely a large portion of home based businesses that do not have business licenses with the town of Edson. In future this is an area that can be economically explored. For our study Community Futures West Yellowhead choose to concentrate on store front businesses for accessibility; however, Community Futures West Yellowhead wanted to have a sample of the home based business population. Figure 2 shows the sample size selected for the Edson Business Visitation Study. This number is meant to reflect a portion or sample size of the local home based businesses and it is not meant to show that there are only 20 home based businesses in Edson.

Figure 2: Business Occupancy n=300



Businesses were asked specifically how the business was acquired (Figure 3): 59% of businesses were built by the owners, and 33% purchased their business from another owner or franchise. The median age of a local business in Edson is 23.34 and 60% of Edson businesses are locally owned (Figure 4). Businesses indicating that they did not have local ownership were asked what had brought their business to Edson. Figure 5 shows the top responses. The majority of businesses in this category stated that they relocated to Edson due to client or industry demand in the area (34%).

Figure 3: How was the business acquired? n=300

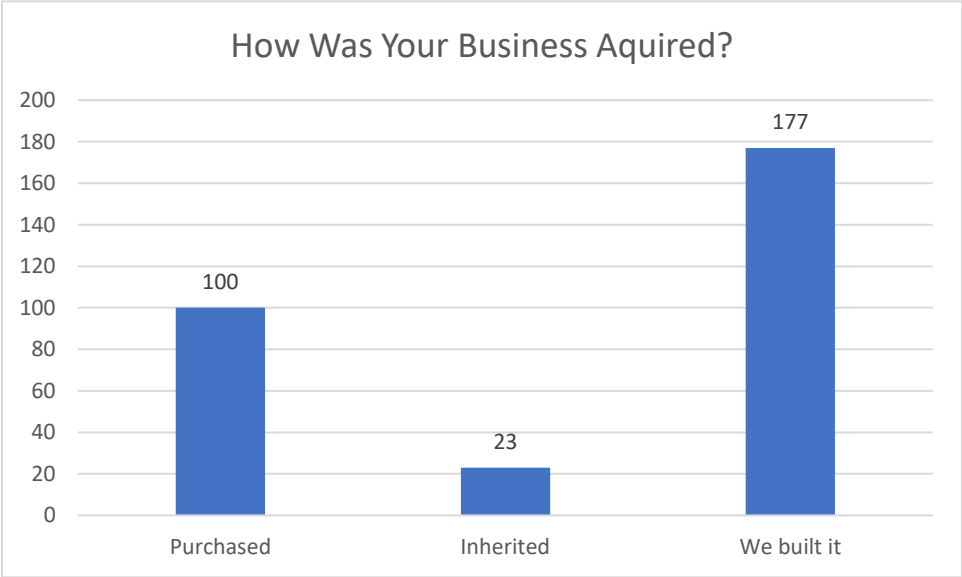


Figure 4: Is your business locally owned? n=300

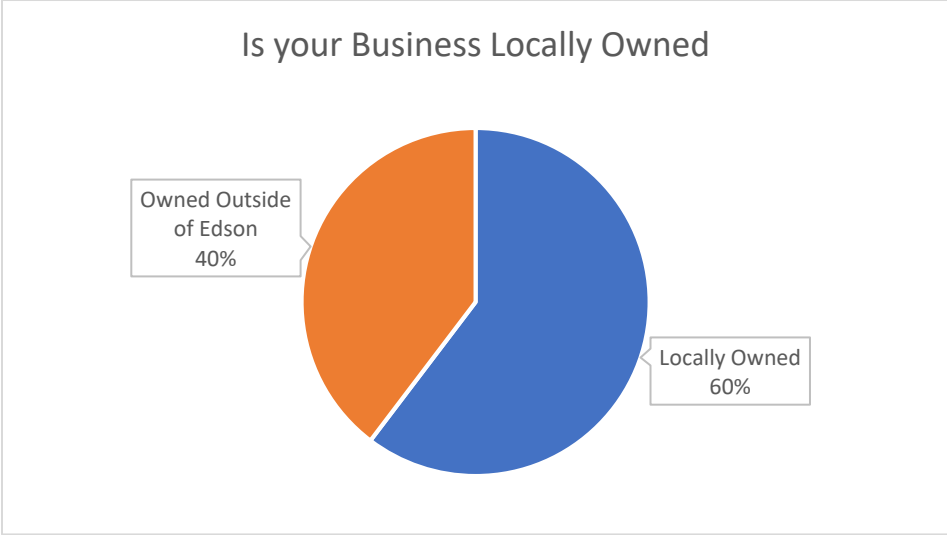
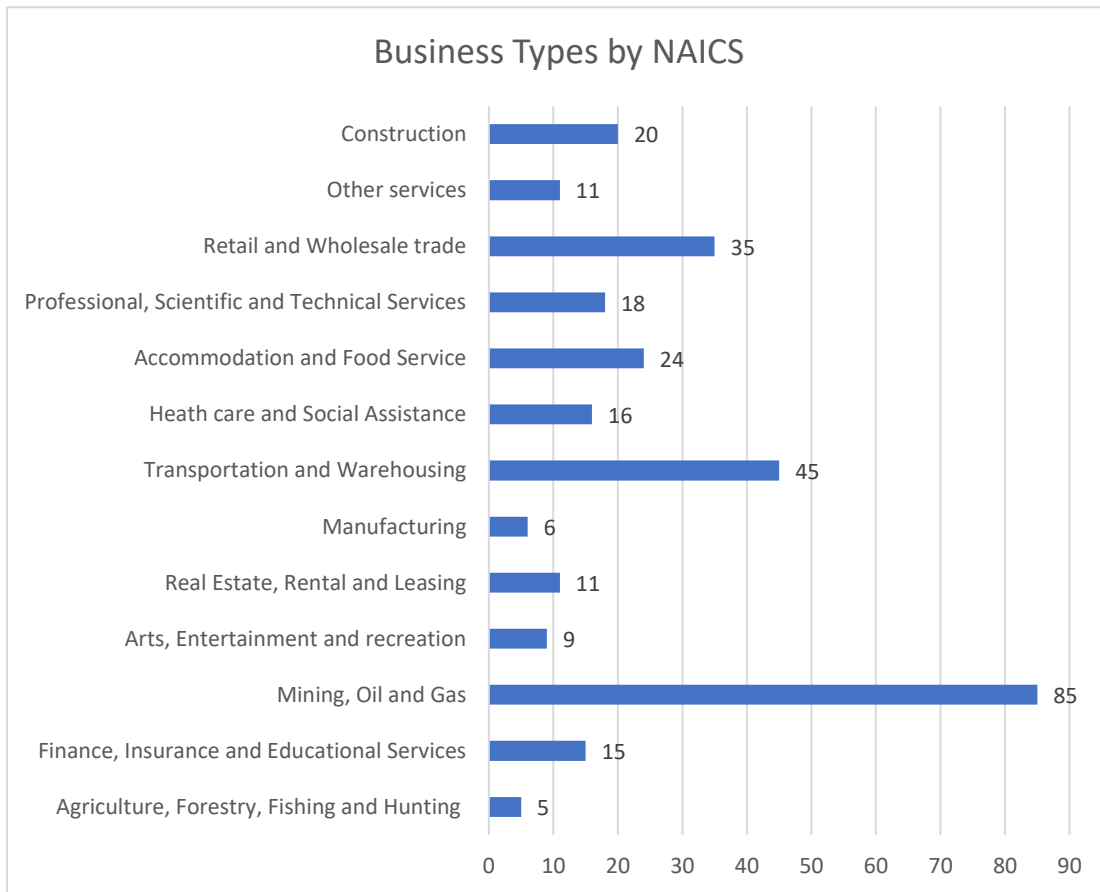


Figure 5: What brought your business to Edson? n=80

	What brought your business to Edson? - top responses
#1	Client / industry demand in the area (34%)
#2	Work life balance (17%)
#3	Relocated due to spousal employment in the area (12%)

Edson has a healthy business mix for a community of its size (Figure 6). Edson boasts a strong retail and wholesale business sector with 14% of the businesses coming from that sector, as well as a growing industrial and resourced based industry (22%). Other notable industries are Finance, Insurance and Educational Services (12%), Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (10%) and Accommodation and Food Services (10%). The breakdown of business interviews by sector for the Edson business Visitation Study is below.

Figure 6: Types of Edson Business n=300



Retention and Expansion:

Most Edson businesses stated that they do not currently have trouble keeping employees due to the current economic climate. However most retail and service businesses stated that when the oil and gas sector is busy within the region, there are significant challenges that come from lack of employee loyalty. These types of comments appeared with most businesses paying around the minimum wage range or slightly above. Some businesses paying above minimum wage have started issuing staff incentives including use of company vehicles, employment perks (financial and otherwise) and offering the potential of benefit packages. Some businesses reported mild success using these strategies, but the lure of a higher base pay still appears to be a driving force in retaining or attracting staff.

Employers in Edson have standard expectations of employee requirements before pre-employment within their companies. Most Edson employers expect job applicants to have standard first aid, often food safety courses and custom service experience. The oil and gas sector requires experience in the field as well as industry specific safety training before employment can commence. Some employers in this sector said that they would consider training on the job or paying for offsite training. Nevertheless with the local economic market favoring employers, and a multiple of current job seekers, employers can choose from higher qualified candidates often with extensive experience. Employers are being more selective with the hiring process and are placing value on the right fit for the job (long term) rather than short term hiring. Employers have also noticed multiple “industry jumpers,” this term refers to workers in an existing established trade who are no longer able to find suitable employment in their current field and are looking to work in oil and gas until the other field picks up. This “jumping” trend has a negative impact on the employers hiring market, as they feel that when other industries start to pick up employees with this type of background will leave, making the investment in training an expensive endeavor.

Attraction and retention trends in Edson are mirrored by other regional communities of approximately this size, with the exception of the oil and gas sector. As Edson is notably the oil and gas hub of the West Yellowhead region, their sector needs are slightly different than their regional counterparts. Multiple oil and gas companies talked about the challenge of attracting and retaining workers with families. The main comments centered around the perceived lack of sporting and youth resources within the community. Satisfaction ratings for the current recreation complex were very low. Comments from businesses stated that when employees are given a change between relocating their families to Whitecourt or Edson for similar positions, most workers with young families have chosen to move to Whitecourt for the recreation facilities including arenas and sports complex. A perceived lack youth facilities and entertainment came up in multiple industries as something that the community should work on improving.

Customers:

The retail sector of Edson presented differently than some of the other West Yellowhead communities with a strong sense of customer loyalty. Edson retail businesses stated that they have strong numbers of repeat customers, with most businesses stating that 60% or more of their customers are repeat customers. Multiple destination stores appear along the main streets of the community of Edson. Consistent retail consumers have been reported from as far as northern BC and Saskatchewan. A small portion of Edson retail businesses reported online traffic worldwide as a significant source of revenue. Business owners often attributed the bulk of revenue to their proximity along a major trade and travel route, unique goods and quality service as well as being a shopping hub for Yellowhead County.

Looking to the oil and gas sector, Edson has strong ties to Drayton Valley with multiple businesses expanding or having ongoing projects in both municipalities. This is something that has not been present in each of the other West Yellowhead communities. Traditionally regional oil and gas companies report head offices or strong ties in Calgary and Edmonton. Cross marketing opportunities and event partnerships with Brazeau County and Hinton were suggested by business owners to improve attraction of families to the area.

Growth:

Businesses in Edson have experienced marginal growth in the past two years, primarily in the retail and professional services sector. The more traditional oil and gas and trades sectors have experienced a decline. Oil and gas businesses reported decreases in number of staffing position and told Community Futures of cut backs and recent layoffs. This is not surprising as the industry has been experiencing a downward trend in the past few years across the province¹⁰. In a community that has a large oil and gas sector this downward trend impacts multiple industries as the economic leakage continues to grow with families searching for lower cost alternatives outside of the community. Although there was a strong sector wide decrease in revenues in the oil and gas sector, some of the larger businesses are still investing in their community. Some contracts still remain and those companies who are able to manage and carry debt load through the leaner times are optimistic that the sector will start to bounce back to pre-2014 profit margins by third quarter of 2017. Some companies are taking the down time to restructure departments and become more efficient overall.

¹⁰ Alberta experiences challenges in the oil and gas sector,
<http://www.calgaryeconomicdevelopment.com/industries/focus-areas/energy/>

What services would you like to see offered from the town of Edson?

Businesses were asked specifically what services they would like to see offered from the town of Edson. The responses for this question were mixed between internal and external town communication, marketing of the community and tourism potential, improving existing services including public engagement of recreational facilities, and the availability of services in the community for youth, seniors and local businesses. These themes are not out of the ordinary for any municipality, but are interesting to analyze based on the individual comments and context in the community. More interestingly still were the number of responses from Edson businesses that indicated that businesses should be responsible for their own entrepreneurial success. As this was an open-ended question business owners had the opportunity to answer however they choose, a large portion reiterated that if the business community wanted to experience positive change in Edson then they would need to be responsible for stepping up and making it happen. Multiple businesses praised changes to the Edson and District Chamber of Commerce over the past 2 years.

Some businesses went on to make positive suggestions for change within the business community itself. Suggesting things such as community outreach dinners and other activities to create more of a ‘close knit’ community where businesses in need could seek mentorship and potential funding from other businesses, presenting the premise of growing the community rather than just an individual business. These community and industry champions were provided with contact information for local business support networks and offered Community Futures West Yellowhead’s support for undertaking such projects.

Edson Community Pride:

Edson businesses commended the town on the partnership with the Edson Rotary club for the Rotary Sundays in the park, discussing the positive attributes for the community of having such a showpiece visible in both directions in Centennial Park. Businesses also spoke highly of the Red Brick Arts Centre and their commitment for local and regional performance. Centennial Park received multiple positive comments as well as the Edson and District Museum. Business owners made specific mention to improvements to town beautification within the last year, but felt there is still work to do along main street and the highway corridor. Businesses talked about needing a shop local incentive to keep Edson residents from spending their money outside of the community, some suggested Edson dollars and increases to local municipal spending.

There is a definite pride that comes with being from Edson, multiple business owners suggested that they wanted to be able to share their pride throughout the region with tourists and increases in provincial marketing of the positives of Edson. Businesses talked about the benefits and challenges of the annual Kinsman Ball Tournament. Most comments regarding the tournament were positive about the influx of new consumers, with multiple businesses suggesting that the community explore another large event to round out the year.

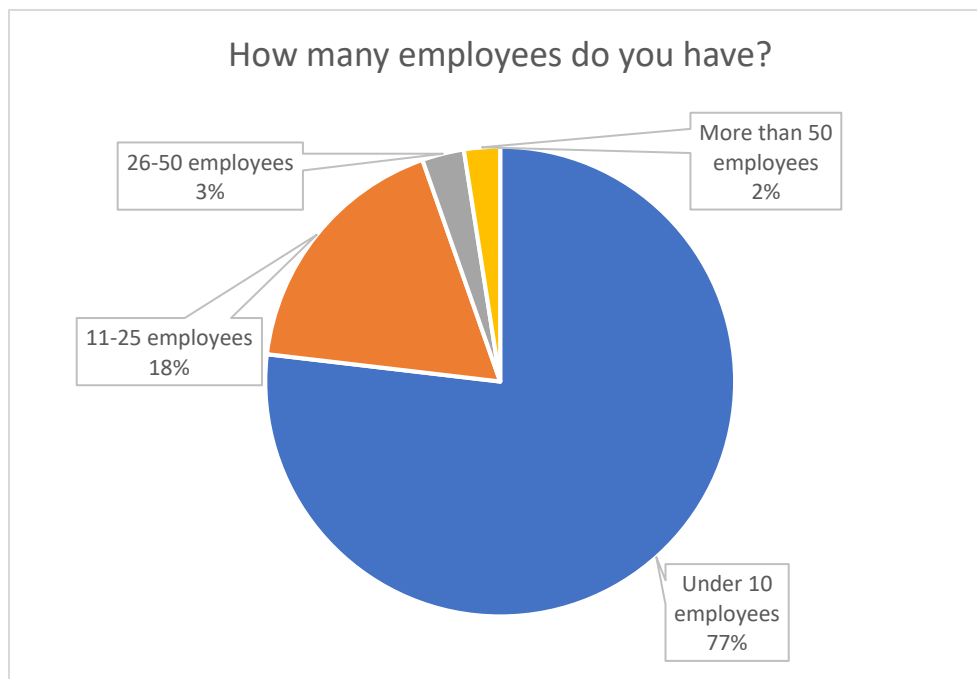
2.2 Questions on Labour (Part B)

This section of the survey focused on the local labour pool of Edson. Looking directly at the number of employees, recruitment and retention challenges and specialized training requirements of Edson businesses.

Business Size

Most businesses in Edson are small to medium sized with 77% reporting under 10 staff positions, and 18% under 25 staff positions (figure 7).

Figure 7: How many employees do you have? n=288



Recruitment and Retention:

Rural communities regularly face challenges in recruitment and retention of qualified workers and many employers talked about the geographical challenge of finding skilled professional labour for their businesses. 48% of businesses faced regular recruitment challenges in finding the “right fit” for their company (Figure 8). Comments in this section include the high cost of living in Edson, proximity to urban centers, and general lack of knowledge of the area.

Oil and gas companies made extensive comments regarding recruiting staff to Edson operations. Most talked about feedback they had received from relocated workers. Many of the larger companies felt that challenges arose with relocating families rather than individual workers. Requests from relocating workers centered around sports facilities, local hockey leagues, recreational opportunities, shopping availability and convenience.

70% of businesses felt that they did not have staff retention challenges (Figure 9), meaning that once businesses were able to attract their employees, a combination of onsite retention programs have been found useful in Edson. Multiple businesses said that the hardest workers to retain to Edson were single men who have a tendency to bounce from area to area with little commitment often between Whitecourt, Drayton Valley and Edson. The second largest challenge in retention was with young families.

Figure 8: Recruitment Challenges n=298

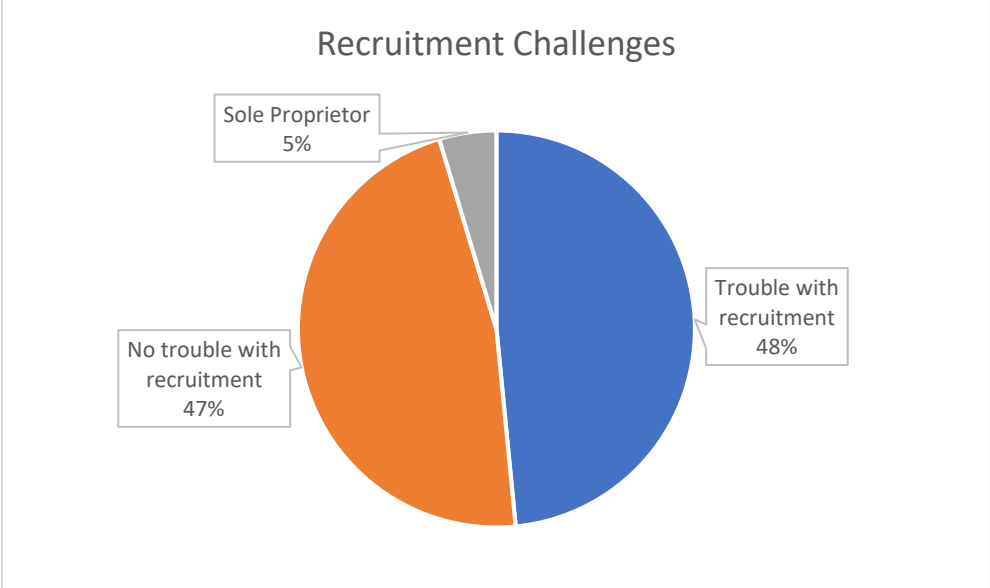
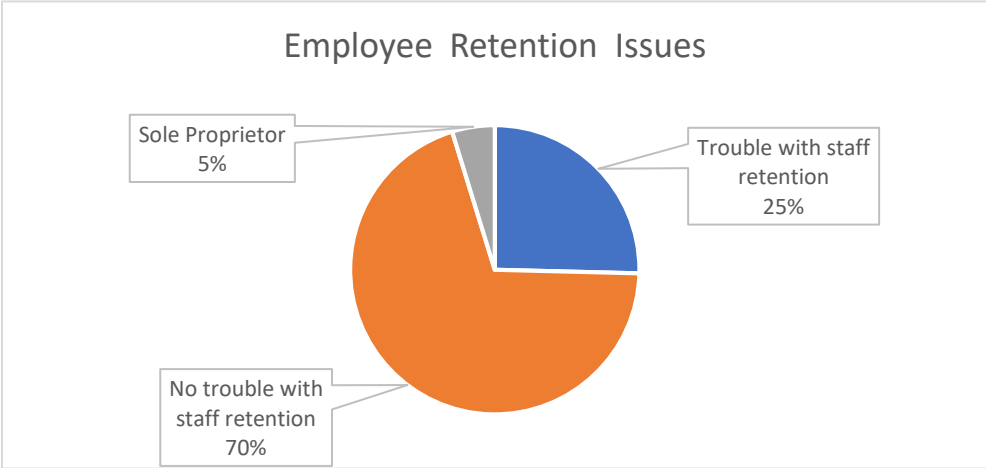


Figure 9: Business Retention Issues n=298



Although the survey indicates that only 25% of Edson businesses have challenges with retention of employees, one has to wonder if when the rising minimum wage increase happens if businesses will fare so well. In the next section, Part C: Business Conditions and Trends, Community Futures West Yellowhead will explore the businesses’ thoughts of the local impact of the new minimum wage increase.

2.3 Part C: Business Conditions and Trends

Year Round Business

The majority of business in Edson are open year round with a few seasonal businesses that are primary tourism driven and are closed typically from 1 to 5 months of the year. Most businesses indicated that if they are closed on a regular basis that they try to complete all renovations or business changes during that time as to not inconvenience customers and provide the best service.

For lodging businesses, occupancy rates were reported to have gone up from the previous summer with strong spring, and summer numbers being reported. Fall numbers appear to be low, but consistent with industry trends in the region. Edson accommodation businesses traditionally have focused on the resource based industries, housing large numbers of workers year round. With economy changes in the oil and gas sector accommodation sector businesses have started to attempt to attract more tourism opportunities.

Minimum Wage Increases

Businesses were asked if the minimum wage increases¹¹ will affected their Edson operations. Most businesses felt that the minimum wage increase did not affect their business (64%). Most of those businesses who expressed that the increase had no effect on their business cited that their workforce is being paid above the minimum wage. However those that did feel that they were affected, experienced drastic changes (Figure 10).

Those businesses that expect to be impacted by the continual minimum wage increases have already started to think about strategies to overcome this challenges. Figure 11 indicates the top 3 responses for how to cope with the increased staffing expense. With businesses suggesting that they would be increasing prices as high as 20% on all goods and services to combat the standardized wage increases and some of these businesses fear that people will simply stop shopping locally.

¹¹ The proposed minimum wage increase refers to the plan of the Alberta NDP Government to go from Alberta being one of the lowest payers of minimum wage in Canada to one of the highest. Minimum wage increased from \$10.20 to \$11.20 on September 30th, 2015 and is proposed to increase to \$15.00 per hour by 2018.

The industry that will be most affected by the minimum wage increase is the retail and wholesale trade sector. 97% of businesses interviewed from this sector expressed that the minimum wage increase will negatively affect their day to day operations. A close second is the accommodation and food service sector, with 92% of those businesses facing a negative impact on their business.

Retail and trade businesses made comments about employees jumping from industry to industry to maximize employment hours and wages. One retail manager spoke extensively about the efforts his business goes through to retain employees. Internal programs focusing on keeping ‘management potential’ staff and promoting from within have been successful in some cases. Employment perks such as additional training, use of company vehicles and flexible work schedules have proven effective. However the draw for higher wages is still too much for some employees to remain as local staff.

Some businesses in the trades industry expressed that they are seeing a substantial amount of oil and gas workers looking for short term employment. This becomes challenging for employers looking to invest money and time into training programs only to have employees leave without notice to return to their original employment sector.

Figure 10: Will your business be affected by the proposed minimum wage increase? N=297

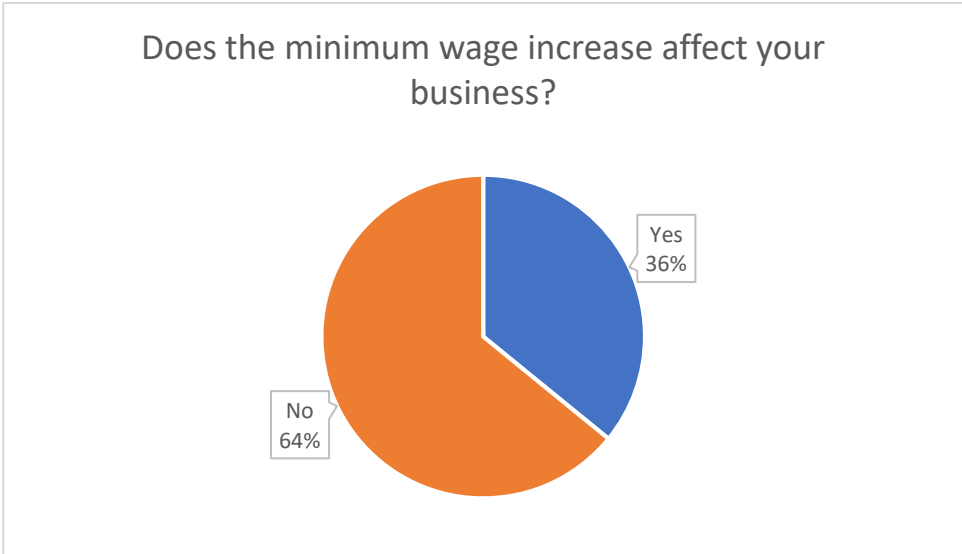


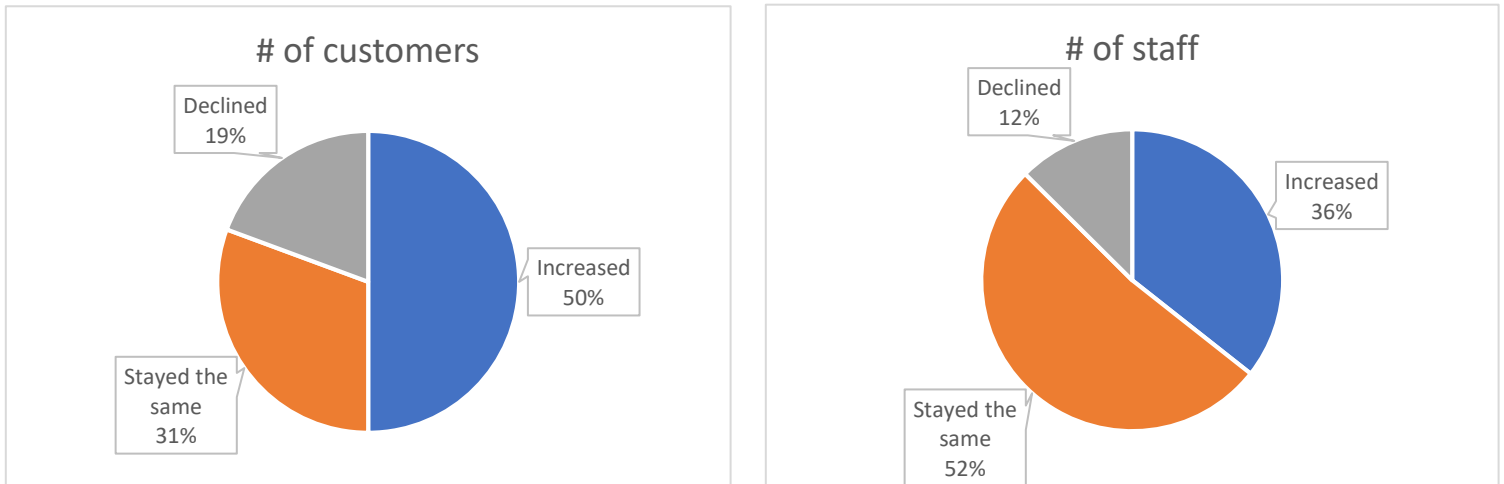
Figure 11:

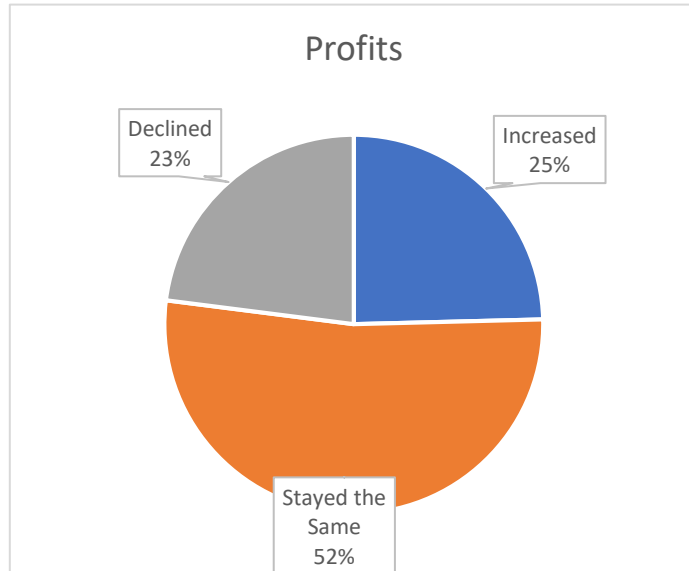
	How will you cope with the proposed minimum wage increase top responses?
#1	Pass the extra costs on to the local consumer (increase prices) (23%)
#2	Cut down on staff or eliminate lower level positions, increasing workload of other workers (16%)
#3	Hire less students and younger employees (13%)

Benchmark Factors 2013-2015

Businesses were asked if a number of factors in their business had increased, stayed the same or declined in the past two years (2013 to 2015). Figure 12 shows the changes over the past two years for business owners in Edson. 50 % of business owners reported an increase in the number of customers during the past two years. Profits have also been on the rise, with 52% indicating an increase since 2013. 88% of Edson businesses have also been able to maintain or expand the number of staff they employ, with 36% stating that they were able to add new staff during the past two years.

Figure 12: Business Changes from 2013-2015





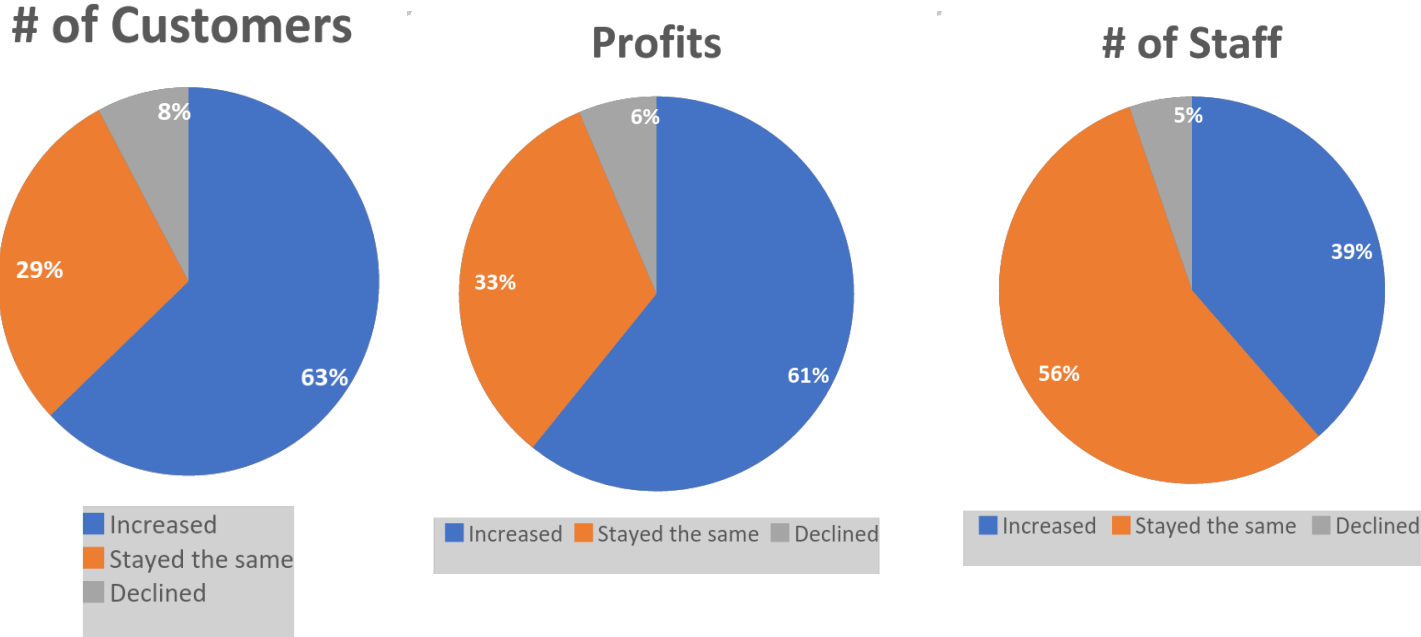
However not all industries reported increases as numbers in mining and oil and gas reported consistent numbers of customers, but decreases in profits, sales total revenue and number of staff. Some businesses expressed that they simply have not grown in the past two years, citing projects getting canceled by head offices. Some businesses mentioned that they haven't seen the end of the industry dip yet as with many contract timelines, companies have been locked into budgets and service agreements based on predictions from previous years.

2.4 Future Business Plans Part D

Predictions for the next two years

Figure 13 shows that Edson businesses are optimistic about the future, with expected increases in number of customers (63%), and overall profits increasing (61%). Most businesses predict to be able to maintain or expand their workforce within the next two years (95%).

Figure 13: Future Business predictions for the next two years



Even industries such as mining and oil and gas who experienced dips in profits, sales total revenue and staffing numbers over the past two years feel that change is imminent. Two businesses from this sector made predictions that numbers would start to rise for their industry in as soon as 3rd quarter 2017. Both of these companies employ larger workforces and hope to be able to rehire all employees who had faced recent layoff situations.

Oil and gas companies also discussed varying budgeting cycles and stated that upcoming budgetary projections will be based on the lean bottom line of 2014 – 2015, so they expect to exceed projections and expectations in 2017-2018.

Renovation and Expansion:

24% of Edson businesses are considering renovating or expanding in the next 12 months. Common obstacles to expansion noted in the survey are things such as: insufficient affordable space, planning and zoning guidelines, and municipal government regulations.

Most businesses that stated that they would be renovating in the next 12 months made comments about the outdoor facade of their building. These businesses expressed that they liked the idea of a beautification program for the town, but did not necessarily want to invest the amount of money required to complete the upgrades, describing the beautification grant as complex.

Comments on gravel versus paved parking lots came out frequently from businesses in industrial areas of Edson primarily in the east portions of the community. Restrictions on paving parking areas and square footage required for official parking spots were of relevance for affected business owners. Most of those affected cited out of date or conflicting regulations.

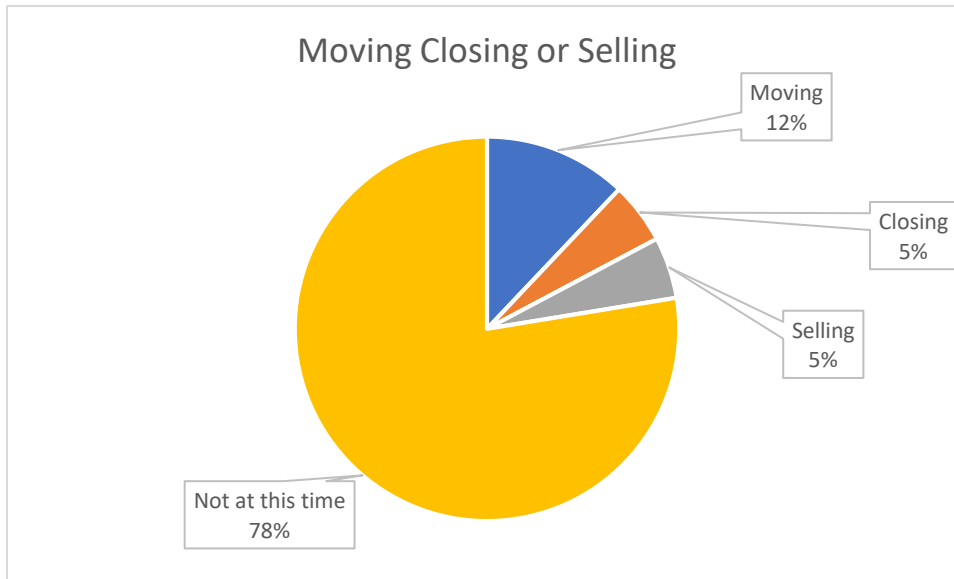
Relocation:

Edson businesses were asked if there were currently considering moving closing or selling their business within the next 12 months. Figure 14 shows that 12% of businesses are planning on leaving the community within the next year. While some economic leakage is to be expected, a large portion of the leaving businesses are within the oil and gas sector. When asked why they are leaving most cited provincial wide economic climates and end of work commitments or moving on to another location for more opportunities for employment. Several businesses within the retail sector also expressed that they would be closing over the next 12 months with the majority citing that their profit margins are simply too small to make themselves viable. As with any rural community businesses new businesses will open and close over the course of the next 12 months organically. Most Canadian jobs (40%) come from existing businesses experiencing growth¹² in rural communities, and this results in sustainable community growth overall.

¹² <http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/02806.html>

Figure 14: Edson Businesses that are Moving Closing or Selling

n=290



Edson Consumers:

Customers of Edson businesses are generally loyal to trade businesses such as mechanic and service companies, but the same cannot be said for the majority of retail businesses. With the exception of a few of the specialty businesses, small Edson retailers do not seem to have a steady flow of consistent clientele. Some Edson businesses have tried to bring in new products to diversify their portfolio of inventory to attract new markets of customers, some with success and some with challenges. The Edson Business Visitation study did not explore businesses that had previously closed within the last 12-24 months, but in speaking with current retailers (in the same geographically area) about why the business may have closed, it appears that this diversification was often a last attempt at new revenue seeking before closing down their business.

With that said, some Edson businesses have been successful in diversifying their portfolio with new products and goods. Some Edson businesses have started branching out into online sales, and multiple businesses suggested that Edson consumers would be looking for more online shopping as a new avenue for consumable and wearable items. Overall Edson businesses did not see a lot of technological advancement specific to their businesses. Some industries, primarily in the technological industries, expect that as their external market place changes so will the products that they sell locally, but at this point were unable to pin point exactly what new technologies would be important further down the road. A comment that was consistent in these questions was the inclusion of high speed broadband internet being necessary through Edson in order to keep the business community relevant within the province.

2.5 Information Needs

Prosper and Grow:

Feedback from local business is key to making smart economic decisions in a community. All Edson businesses were asked what could be done in the community to create a culture of prosperity and growth, the question was open ended and responses varied. The following five themes emerged from comments in this question.

Figure: 15 How can Edson prosper and grow? Top responses:

Multiple responses were given to this question with many businesses identifying more than one action.

Priority:	Action:
#1	Improve business startup procedures including adding incentives for new businesses
#2	Create an Edson awareness campaigns; increase town marketing and community events; focus on signature events such as Rotary Sundays in the Park, and the Kinsman Ball Tournament
#3	Create a sustainable shop local campaign that is a movement in the community
#4	Create a network where Edson businesses support each other, identifying local champions within the business community
#5	Businesses want more support and communication from the key support organizations (such as the Town and Edson and District Chamber of Commerce)

Barriers for growth of the community:

Barriers for growth in Edson were identified as being related to a transient populations and favoritism in town and business relationships. Not surprising in a community that is heavily impacted by the oil and gas sector, recent changes by the NDP government¹³ were heavily criticized by local business owners, as well as increases to the Alberta minimum wage¹⁴. The state of the Alberta economy was noted multiple times by business owners as a barrier for local business growth. Ease of permitting and paperwork associated with the process was a concern for businesses as well as off-site levies. Businesses identified the entrance of the town as being an 'eye sore' to potential travelers and commented on areas of the community that could use beautification initiatives¹⁵. Traffic lights and ease of accessibility were mentioned by business owners, in-particular during busy times when locals try to get from one side of town to the other. Businesses talked about tourist wayfinding problems of having one way streets, unclearly marked intersections, and google map challenges.

Comments from the retail sector suggested that council does not want new small business to be a priority in the community. A significant number of comments compared the town to surrounding municipalities; for instance Hinton was praised for its newly paved roads through the community along highway 16 and Whitecourt for its recreational and sports complex.

Community Satisfaction Factors:

Edson businesses were asked about how the businesses felt about community services. Edson businesses were asked to rate the services on a sliding scale and the responses can be found in Figure 16. Any service that was rated below average was asked how they felt the service or factor could be improved.

¹³ <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/energy-and-resources/alberta-election-oil-patch/article24272879/>

¹⁴ Alberta's minimum wage will increase to \$15.00 per hour by 2018 in an effort to move towards a living wage for every Albertan, <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-minimum-wage-changes.aspx>

¹⁵ Most businesses that are eligible for the town of Edson beautification grant were aware of the service and had been visited by a town employee regarding the program. Most businesses stated that they had not taken advantage of the program as of yet.

Figure 16: Community Satisfaction Factors

Community Factor:	Response:
Built Environment	83% felt that this was average
Public Space	66% felt that this was average to good
Parks	67% felt that this was good to excellent
Trail Network	65% felt that this was good to excellent
Sports Facilities	83% felt that this was fair to poor
Public Art	65% felt that this was average to good
Street Use	66% felt that it was average
Wayfinding	67% felt that it was poor to average
Parking	50% felt that it was poor to average
Special Events	83% felt that it was good
Cultural Identity	67% felt that it was good
Customer Service	50% felt it was average
Community Spirit	65% felt that it was average or better

The following comments accompanied responses recorded as ‘less than average’ in response to the community factors. The number inside the bracket indicates the number of similar responses, if no number appears then it is the only comment of that nature. Responses have been edited only to simplify the message and group with similar comments.

Built Environment:

- During peak periods it is often hard to get across town due to the one way nature of the stress, more traffic lights or stop signs would help eliminate this pressure (4) *Multiple Industries*
- The traffic is congested around the Smittys intersection (4) *Multiple Industries*
- The roads near the campground at the East end of town need to be paved (3) *Accommodation and Food Service Sector*

Public Space Aesthetics:

- Edson's streets are often dirty with dust and grime, existing parking lots downtown need repair and regular cleaning (3) *Multiple Industries*
- Consistent branding throughout the community on all town buildings would improve beautification. (2) *Retail Sector, Professional Sector*
- The former beautification program missed the mark, plants die or get destroyed, the program didn't cover the costs of painting and upgrades. (2) *Retail Sector, Professional Sector*

Parks:

- Centennial park is a show piece for the community, more promotion of having events there needs to take place (4) *Oil and Gas Sector, Professional Sector*
- The skateboard park needs upgrading (1) *Retail Sector*

Trail Network:

- Edson has great trails (3) *Multiple Industries*
- The town should improve the ring trail around the community, and install pedestrian operated traffic lights for safety in crossing highway 16 (3) *Multiple Industries*
- Lighting on all paved town trails would be an improvement (2) *Retail Sector, Professional Services Sector*

Sports Facilities:

- Edson needs a larger scale recreation complex that houses a field house and attracts residents and newcomers to the community. Comments were made comparing the Edson Facility to Stoney Plain, Whitecourt, Grande Prairie and Grande Cache (25) *Multiple Industries*
- Edson should look at hosting more concerts in the stadium (2) *Oil and Gas Sector, Retail Sector*

Wayfinding:

- The intersection near the East entrance of town is complex in both directions for everyone other than locals (7) *Hotel and Accommodation Sector, Oil and Gas Sector*
- The McDonalds' and Smittys pass-through parking lot is hazardous (4) *Multiple Industries*
- Goggle maps provides wrong directions in and around Edson due to the street configuration (3) *Multiple Industries*

Edson Businesses were asked what the community could do to help all businesses prosper and grow this was an open-ended question and allowed the business community to make suggestions and comments as they chose. The following table breaks down individual themes brought out by different industries for this question. Some NAICS Codes have been combined to ensure the confidentiality of businesses.

Figure 17: Prosper and Grow Responses

Industry:	Comments:
Construction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby the province for more road maintenance through highway 16 • More landscaping along highway 16 needed • Take better care of your trees along main street
Other Services:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be healthy living incentives for town employees and community residents • Edson needs more recycling offered throughout the town, Green Effort, pick up service. Services are good now but need more help from the town.
Retail and Wholesale Trade:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edson needs to fix the signage for the turn off of the highway coming into Edson • Edson needs more tourism, we shouldn't keep catering to workers • More investment into snow plowing annually • Costs of doing business in Edson are astronomical, gas, grocery, property expenses are too high.
Professional, Scientific and Technical:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More services are needed for new Canadians, community inclusion events • Attract more trades people to Edson • Edson needs more kid friendly programming, camp alternatives for after school care, and needs a bigger Canada day
Accommodation and Food Service:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edson needs to fix the roads between lions Campground and the Park Motel • More traffic lights by Morad going toward Edmonton. One set at each end of town and corner of the recreation center. • Attract an office supply store, electronics

	<p>store and plumbing store</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on summer tourism, make Edson more than just a ball town
Health Care and Social Assistance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising options, chamber can be expensive and a huge commitment. I need something simplified to help market my business • Cleaner roads and sidewalks • Recreation Centre improvements will help with retention of families
Transportation and Warehousing, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attach more consumers to town by having more activities and concerts to bring people in • Easier access to truck wash and truck stops • Puddling and road maintenance need improvement • The town needs to spend more responsibly • The Chamber is proactive but needs to be more involved in the big picture of the town • Many curbs in town are not truck friendly
Manufacturing / Real Estate / Arts Entertainment and Recreation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Town should spend more time / money on advertising local businesses and educating on what they can access through the municipality, provincially, and federally • Communication is more important to work on than beautification
Mining, Oil and Gas:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walmart stays open till 10pm, Independent and IGA need longer hours to accommodate workers • Maintenance needs more communications (road closures/ construction) notices don't always come out in a timely fashion or at all • Education and communication can improve. The town is industry heavy so business strongly depends on the economy. • Recruitment / attraction for families. Multiplex facilities- people are not taking jobs in Edson and leaving for Whitecourt due to the facilities.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for future planning based on the feedback provided by 2017 Edson Business Visitation Survey. Recommendations are meant to be used as a tool for further action within the community, and potential partners for each goal have been identified.

Goals and Partners:

Celebrate and Encourage Business in Edson:

Goal: Create and support a formalized group of community stakeholders from the business community to monitor the community's progress and ensure the town's strategic direction stays relevant to Edson's priorities and needs.

Goal: Create incentives for business development in key areas.

Goal: Create more opportunities for home based business growth, making it more accessible and enticing to register businesses with the municipality.

Potential Partners: The Edson and District Chamber of Commerce, The town of Edson, Grande Prairie Regional College, Edson business community

Increase Community Engagement:

Goal: Perform quarterly business walks, engaging with local businesses and stakeholders

Goal: Designate an individual or group to conduct interviews with closing or relocating businesses, addressing vacant store fronts.

Goal: Educate employers on best practices while doing business with a higher minimum wage, including retention of staff.

Potential Partners: Community Futures West Yellowhead, The Edson and District Chamber of Commerce, The town of Edson, local business community, Government of Alberta

Increase Communications:

Goal: Nurture businesses to create community social interaction and networking / mentoring events. Foster relationships between business support networks and the municipality.

Goal: Create regional marketing opportunities in partnership with Brazeau County and West Yellowhead Municipalities.

Goal: Increase communications regarding recreational community planning and potential future upgrades.

Goal: Increase communication with the general public through continued social media

Potential Partners: Community Futures West Yellowhead, The Edson and District Chamber of Commerce, The town of Edson, town of Edson communications department, local business community

Invest in the Future:

Goal: Develop and invest in youth programming and continue to develop opportunities for youth engagement and community involvement.

Goal: Nurture and provide assistance for existing businesses to grow and expand within Edson.

Goal: Continue to expand and promote Edson beautification programs and environmentally friendly grass roots initiatives.

Goal: Support and create a regional economic development alliance.

Potential Partners: Community Futures West Yellowhead, The Edson and District Chamber of Commerce, The town of Edson, Grande Prairie Regional College, high schools, mainstream financial institutions

Think Strategically:

Goal: Create an economic development position reporting to a community development committee of business owners, stakeholders, and town administration.

Goal: Create an Opportunity Development Fund or discretionary incentive available to the Edson Business community to be accessed for community projects

Goal: Create a community asset inventory to take strategic advantage and a proactive approach to addressing current and future challenges and opportunities

Goal: Work with stakeholders and grassroots groups to develop a new festival or grow existing event to act as a tourism boost in spring / fall season.

Potential Partners: The Edson and District Chamber of Commerce, The town of Edson, Grande Prairie Regional College, Edson Community Engagement Committee

Moving Forward

The Edson Business Visitation Study is meant to represent a benchmark, or snapshot in time. The study is designed to be facilitated every two years and compared to the previous findings. Over this period a full understanding into the economic state of the community of Edson is visible.

For more information on this study or to receive a copy of this study, please contact:

Community Futures West Yellowhead
221 Pembina Avenue
Hinton, AB
T7V 2B3

T: 780-865-1224

W: www.westyellowhead.albertacf.com

Appendix: A

Date: _____

Company Name:

Main Contact:

Phone Number: _____

Email address: _____

Web address (URL): _____

For office use only:

NAICS code: _____

Date of Meeting: _____

Visit Number: _____

Outreach Specialist: _____

This Business Visitation study is brought to you by :



Disclaimer (Notice to Survey Respondents):

- The originator of this survey is solely responsible for its contents. **Your response to the survey is voluntary and all responses are confidential.** If you are asked in the survey to reveal your identity or the identity of the organization on whose behalf you are responding and do not wish to do so, please do not respond to the question. Your response will be used by the survey originator only for the purpose identified by the originator.
- If you are given an opportunity to submit free-form responses to a survey, please provide relevant and responsible responses; refrain from disparaging, offensive, harassing or otherwise inappropriate language; and refrain from including any sensitive information of any kind (e.g., credit card or bank account information).

Please Initial:

7. Does your business have problems retaining paid employees in the following categories? **(Circle the answer: Yes /No)**

Year Round		Winter Seasonal		Summer Seasonal	
Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time
Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

NOTE: For the purpose of the next question, "special training" is defined by a specific set of skills that the employer is not expecting to train the new employee on the jobsite.

8. Do your employees require any "special" training?

Yes No

If Yes, please explain this more fully.

PART C: BUSINESS CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

NOTE: Answer either 15a, or 15b depending on industry.

9a. For lodging businesses:

For each season please estimate the following number of units and average occupancy rates

	Average % Occupancy Rate
Winter Dec, Jan, Feb	
Spring Mar, Apr, May	
Summer June, Jul, Aug	
Fall Sep, Oct, Nov	

9b. For all other businesses: In a typical year, are you closed for any months of the year? **(Circle all that apply)**

January	April	July	October
February	May	August	November
March	June	September	December

10. What percent of your customers are in each of the following categories?

- (a) Local Consumers _____%
- (b) Visitors – Family Vacation _____%
- (c) Regional Residents _____%
- (d) Specialized Consumers _____%
- (e) Other (**specify**) _____%

11. Where are your customers from? **(List percent from each geographic area)**

- | | | | |
|-------------------|--------|---------------------------|--------|
| Hinton | _____% | Calgary | _____% |
| Jasper | _____% | Another Alberta location | _____% |
| Edson | _____% | Another Canadian location | _____% |
| Grand Cache | _____% | USA | _____% |
| Yellowhead County | _____% | Europe | _____% |
| Edmonton | _____% | Asia | _____% |

12. What percentage of your customers are repeat customers?
_____%

13. What new products or services do you think your customers will want from your business in the next 5-10 years?

14. Is new technology emerging that will change your company's product or how it is produced? **(Circle)**
Yes No

If Yes, please explain:

15. Over the last two years, have the following business factors increased, stayed the same, or declined? **(Circle)**

	Increased	Stayed the same	Declined
Number of customers	+	same	-
Sales- total revenue	+	same	-
Profits	+	same	-
Employees- full time	+	same	-
Employees- part time	+	same	-

16. If any of the business factors increased or decreased, what were the principal reasons for the changes?

17.a) Are you currently considering renovating or expanding your building or facilities? **(Circle)**

Yes No

17.b) If you answered yes to question 17a, what impact will this have on the number of people you employ? **(Circle)**

- (a) adding employees
- (b) reducing employees
- (c) no change
- (d) I am not renovating at this time

18. Are you currently considering moving, closing or selling your business? **(Circle all that apply)**

- (a) Considering moving If so, when: _____
- (b) Considering closing If so, when: _____
- (c) Considering selling If so, when: _____
- (d) Not at this time

Comments:

19. Why are you considering moving, closing, or selling? (**Circle all that are appropriate**)

- (1) not considering moving, closing or selling at this time
- (2) changing market conditions
- (3) obsolete building
- (4) redevelop the property
- (5) high property value
- (6) pass it on to another generation in the family
- (7) no land for expansion
- (8) transportation problems
- (9) crime / vandalism
- (10) low work productivity
- (11) environmental concerns
- (12) rigid code enforcements
- (13) high property taxes
- (14) lease expiration
- (15) poor telecommunications
- (16) declining population
- (17) insufficient labour supply
- (18) retiring
- (19) another business opportunity
- (20) business loans
- (21) other (please specify) _____

PART E: INFORMATION NEEDS

20. As a business, what services would you like to see offered from the town of Edson?

21. Are there barriers to growth in this community?

Yes No

If *Yes*, what are they?

22. Are there suppliers that we should attract to this region?

Yes No

If *Yes*, please list:

23. In terms of doing business, how do you rate this community with respect to these factors:

A=Excellent; B=Good; C=Average; D=Poor; E=Very Poor

Built environment	A	B	C	D	E
Public space aesthetics	A	B	C	D	E
Parks	A	B	C	D	E
Trail network	A	B	C	D	E
Sports facilities	A	B	C	D	E
Public art	A	B	C	D	E
Street use	A	B	C	D	E
Wayfinding	A	B	C	D	E
Parking	A	B	C	D	E
Special events	A	B	C	D	E
Cultural identity	A	B	C	D	E
Customer service	A	B	C	D	E
Community spirit	A	B	C	D	E
Other (please specify): _____	A	B	C	D	E

24. Are you interested in forming a strategic alliance or partnership with another company? **(Circle)**

Yes No

If *Yes*, please describe the type of project, desired assistance and timeline:

25. What should the community of Edson work on to help all community businesses to prosper and grow?

26. Is there anything you would like to add that we have not addressed?

Thank you for participating in the Business Visitation Study. Your identity will be kept confidential.

For more information please contact:

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