

The Redford government is not telling the truth about public sector wages.

The fact is that some public service jobs – usually those where many women work, such as hospital services or clerical – pay better than in the private sector. This is because unions have been able to negotiate pay equity and better treatment for women than women have achieved without the benefit of a union in the private sector.

But the truth is many jobs in Alberta’s public service pay less than their private sector counterparts.

The Truth about Public-Sector Wages

Thanks to strong job growth, wages in Alberta – all wages – are higher than the national average. This is as true for public-sector workers as it is for managers and oil and gas workers. The truth is that public-sector pay and benefits is fair and modest in the context of the Alberta labour market. And consider the importance of these jobs: these workers run the province. These workers care for our families in hospitals, they protect our environment, and they care for our children.

Wage Growth in Context

Wage Growth (Average Weekly Earnings) above inflation - 1993 to 2013

Sector	% above inflation	\$ above inflation
Management of companies and enterprises	52%	\$550.37
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	48.50%	\$316.42
Professional, scientific and technical services	44.20%	\$450.31
Other services (except public administration)	38.20%	\$245.53
Construction	36.90%	\$406.20
Transportation and warehousing	33.40%	\$322.44
Industrial Aggregate	21.70%	\$198.87
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	18.70%	\$307.02
Utilities	16.80%	\$246.31
Public administration	13.10%	\$145.57
Trade	8.90%	\$66.51
Health care and social assistance	7.10%	\$59.78
Educational services	5.30%	\$53.33
Manufacturing	5.10%	\$57.22
Accommodation and food services	4%	\$16.00
Information and cultural industries	3.80%	\$41.79
Retail trade	2.70%	\$16.28
Arts, entertainment and recreation	-3.30%	(\$19.52)

Average Public-Sector Wages

The Average Weekly Earnings of an Alberta civil servant in 2012 was \$1,334.95, or \$66,748 a year based on a 50-week work year. This is modest when compared to other sectors in Alberta, such as construction, management, oil and gas, and utilities. Workers in these sectors earn higher Average Weekly Earnings than public administration workers.

Alberta's Incredible Shrinking Public Service

The government had 5,000 fewer workers on its 2012 payroll compared to 1989, despite our province's population growing by 1.3 million people. That's more Albertans who rely on the services that the government provides and more people who pay taxes.

Some Government Jobs Pay More than the Private Sector, but Others Pay Less

Workers in jobs that are considered low-wage in the private sector enjoy higher wages in the public sector. This is true, but so is the opposite: wages are lower for high-end private-sector jobs in the government. Administrative clerks (NOC 1411), for example, earn more working for the government (\$46,682 in 2011) than they would in the private sector (all industries' average of \$45,422). Conversely, a civil engineer (NOC 2231) would earn far more in the private sector (up to an average of \$73,393) than in the public sector (\$68,577).

The 2006 Census showed that Alberta public-sector workers earned on the average 2 per cent *less* than their private-sector counterparts. The Census also showed women working in the public sector earned more than similar jobs in the private sector.

Sources

Statistics Canada, "CANSIM Table 281-002: Average Weekly Earnings 2012," <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/govt19a-eng.htm>

Government of Alberta, "Wages and Salaries in Alberta 2011," <http://alis.alberta.ca/wageinfo/Content/RequestAction.asp?format=html&aspAction=GetWageHomePage&Page=Home>

Statistics Canada, "2006 Census," Custom dataset and tabulation.