

SAIT Podcast: Calgary's Tech Ecosystem: A Hub for Innovation and Growth

[00:00:00] **ANNCR:** The Best Careers You Never Knew Existed Podcast sparked by SAIT and co hosted by Citi, the podcast that helps you navigate jobs, learn about new careers and industries!

[00:00:12] **Lora:** Hi, I'm Lora and I work in continuing education and professional studies at SAIT.

[00:00:17] **Zach:** And I'm Zach, the founder of Careers in Technology and Innovation.

[00:00:20] **Lora:** Today, we're talking to Chelsea from Calgary Economic Development.

[00:00:24] **Zach:** Happy listening.

[00:00:25] **ANNCR:** Now, here's a career you never knew existed.

[00:00:27] **Lora:** Welcome to the podcast. Will you introduce yourself?

[00:00:31] **Chelsea:** Hi, my name is Chelsea Hallick. I work as the business development manager, enterprise technology at Calgary Economic Development.

[00:00:41] **Chelsea:** And I do have a fun fact. Want to hear it? So, I'm one of the many imports from Saskatchewan, similar to yourself. And I studied at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. My fun fact is that while I was studying international business and entrepreneurship, I developed a desire to see the world.

[00:01:02] **Chelsea:** And I hadn't really been anywhere in my life. And I, within 10 years, traveled to 30 different countries. and everything from hiking Machu Picchu to swimming with pink dolphins, and even taking my four-month-old daughter to the Great Wall of China. Wow, that's

[00:01:21] **Lora:** Wow, that's amazing. What a great experience.

[00:01:22] **Chelsea:** I'll have to take some of that offline.

[00:01:24] **Lora:** Yeah. Absolutely.

[00:01:26] **Lora:** Well, thanks for joining us. We really wanted to talk about what's happening in tech in Calgary and such a great resource because you in your role are really at the forefront of a lot of what's happening. So, can you give us a bit of a perspective of what's happening in tech in Calgary?

[00:01:44] **Chelsea:** I can. So, I have the privilege to, you know, really work day in and day out with the industry, with government, community and ecosystem partners. And also, with business and industry and our role at Calgary Economic Development, our mandate is to help companies land, expand and attract, retain, expand capital talent and investment in the city companies.

[00:02:13] **Chelsea:** So, my role specifically is I really work at that level where you're focused on the business retention, expansion, and attraction, and ensuring that we have a really healthy and vibrant ecosystem for companies to be able to grow and thrive for them to be able to find the talent that they need and the business environment that would help them create meaningful job growth here in the city.

[00:02:41] **Chelsea:** So, our tech and innovation ecosystem has been a really exciting place to be working over the last few years. It's been on overdrive. The last five years, we've seen year over year record breaking venture capital levels. We've had nearly a 500 percent increase in the accelerators and incubators that we have in the city, and there's so, so much momentum in the tech sector to celebrate.

[00:03:09] **Chelsea:** Last year, we were ranked by LinkedIn as the fastest growing tech talent market in North America. So, we're really starting to see those proof points come together for all of the work that's been done by the community in the tech sector.

[00:03:20] **Zach:** When companies are looking to expand into other geographies, and you've touched on this a little bit, but like, What would be the top three things they're looking for?

[00:03:31] **Chelsea:** The number one thing, especially in tech, is talent. Above all else, talent is always number one. And then, of course, like the economic opportunity in the city and the business friendly environment. So, from a cost perspective, that can be really important too. Livability of the city and Stability as well. So, I'd say like if I were to sum them up really high level.

[00:03:56] **Chelsea:** Those are the factors. They typically stand out for a company who's looking to relocate or expand their operations.

[00:04:03] **Zach:** And what makes Calgary unique in those three areas?

[00:04:06] **Chelsea:** So many things. The level of champions, like the spirit in the city. And that's something that's truly unique to Calgary above other markets.

[00:04:15] **Chelsea:** And I know that because I hear it firsthand all the time. They're like I visited City A and City B. But you guys, like your business leaders want us here. You're so collaborative, like the ecosystem is just like really willing to work together and see others succeed. So, we call it this unmatched spirit.

[00:04:34] **Chelsea:** And that's something that's really special about Calgary that stands out because a lot of the other pieces like Often we're competing with other markets that will say similar things. So yes, we have like highly skilled talent and a productive workforce, which is super important. And we have proof points certainly that like stand out among other cities.

[00:04:54] **Chelsea:** Like we have the highest percentage of post secondary graduates with STEM degrees of any Canadian city. Alberta is seeing the highest immigration levels in the country. So, we've had over a 445 percent year over year increase in our population growth from net migration. Like in comparison to our previous net migration rates, which is larger than our oil and gas boom days, right?

[00:05:17] **Chelsea:** So, there's tons going on here that we're one of the fastest growing Gen Z populations for a tech talent market in North America. So, there's so, so much happening across talent. Never mind that, you know, we have an overall lower cost of operating because we have the lowest corporate taxes in the nation, plus no payroll tax, no provincial sales tax, no healthcare premiums, so there's a lot of things that stack up for us that make us a more favorable market to invest in.

[00:05:46] **Lora:** So, is it only the tech industry that's booming, or are we seeing tech in other industries?

[00:05:52] **Chelsea:** We look at now, like, tech as an enabler to all industries. There was a digital transformation study done a couple years ago that measured, you know, what's the economic impact of all of our key sectors transforming their Businesses to the new economy and really like going through this digital transformation.

[00:06:15] **Chelsea:** And so that's across like Energy and Environment and Clean Tech and Aerospace and Transportation and Logistics, Life Sciences and Agriculture, you know, feeding the world and technology on its own, and there's over a 20 billion digital transformation spend measured in Alberta, over just a couple of years.

[00:06:40] **Lora:** That's amazing. So when, when you're talking to companies about coming to Calgary and looking at the types of companies that have come to Calgary, what types of companies are you talking to, looking at, are coming here?

[00:06:53] **Chelsea:** Yeah, great question. Just last month in July, we had three tech companies. They were all SaaS companies.

[00:07:02] **Chelsea:** So, software as a service announced their like, their North American or their Canadian headquarters here in Calgary and one was more, you know, on the, they each have a really unique value propositions, but really leading SAS companies. So, we have one that was more in the events space, but like full suite events.

[00:07:22] **Chelsea:** So, like Metaverse, like all in one software solution platform, um, one that's a software company that's more in like social and wellness and one that's in like, uh, more in like the early childhood space. So really each of them having a really unique software that they will, you know, have global customers for, but saw Calgary as a great home for them to build their team.

[00:07:52] **Lora:** Yeah, I think I attended a couple of those events and they reiterated that the Calgary spirit and the ecosystem played a big factor in their decision to come. So, if they're looking for talent, or if they need talent, what sort of talent are they looking for?

[00:08:08] **Chelsea:** Usually a variety of roles, so certainly tech roles are super important.

[00:08:13] **Chelsea:** You know, it's, and it's not just software engineers, like some of them are getting into really specific skills, and we have a fabulous talent pool of engineers, but also like, AI and ML skills and debugging and UX and UI, and then it's also the other roles that really round out their business too that are super important.

[00:08:34] **Chelsea:** And Calgary has a very strong talent pool with business and sales acumen and marketing experience. And so it's a little bit of everything.

[00:08:44] **Zach:** What are some areas or concerns that these companies will bring up to you when you're first meeting with them, or maybe some things they think about Calgary or Alberta?

[00:08:56] **Zach:** And what's Calgary Economics Development's thoughts on those concerns?

[00:09:00] **Chelsea:** This is one of my favorite questions when we're interviewing other people to work for us too. I mean, talent is always a concern. So... Do we have enough? And that's, you know, like, we've certainly, uh, lost investments to larger tech talent labor pools because they want to ensure that, you know, they'll get the skills they need, maybe they don't have to develop them all in house or they're getting the right levels of experience that they need, and certainly the ability to get mid to senior level talent locally can be challenging, and especially if somebody has a really unique niche skill set that they're looking for.

[00:09:37] **Chelsea:** There's much, much larger tech markets, but we can offer a lot of benefits that they can't. And so, I would say that would be number one. Seeing that there is a burgeoning like tech and innovation ecosystem is always a question, but then when people come here and they experience it, they get it.

[00:09:55] **Chelsea:** They're like, oh, there is. Tons going on here and the, and the community is so close knit and like enables each other. So that's always a question, but I think it's one that we always overcome really well. And the, with the concerns around the talent pool, we have so, so much going for us in terms of growth, in terms of re skilling programs and up skilling programs and micro credentials and the proof points around like we've seen.

[00:10:20] **Chelsea:** You know, a 200 percent increase in tech training program completions in the last two years and the immigration levels that we're seeing and the 60 percent growth in the tech talent pool over five years, those stats are really helpful for us to overcome and show the potential long term in Calgary and we get around that by with our talent strategy is to reskill retain and retrain and attract the right talent to our city so it's really multi prong and we make sure that you know that the city is behind the economic strategy for Calgary and really focused on that multi prong approach so that we can continue to fit the needs of all of our local companies who are expanding and the ones who are looking to invest in the region.

[00:11:08] **Zach:** Do you feel that, you know, our traditional industry of being oil and gas, there are some stereotypes around the industry that it's older or slower moving or not as innovative? Is that what you're seeing generally in our ecosystem? Are people all still perceiving that? And are you seeing people being able to actually move industries?

[00:11:30] **Chelsea:** Yeah, we, I'd say like a couple years ago, that was like one of the number one questions people asked me, they were like, will talent actually want to pivot their career from oil and gas to tech? Or like, are they interested in working for us? Or, you know, when oil and gas comes back, will they jump and go back over there?

[00:11:52] **Chelsea:** And I haven't heard that in a while. And I think there's a reason for that in that That was a huge concern for people, but now we've seen so much proof in the retention of employees in other industries, even if it's someone who's skilled and has these new digital skills and they've gone back to the oil and gas sector, but are, you know, more in like data, uh, analysis or data scientist roles for those major industries that we still support, we're just, we're seeing a general overall upskilling, no matter which sector you're in.

[00:12:27] **Chelsea:** And some people are gravitating towards new sectors. And we're not really seeing that like bounce back and forth. And there's a lot of like, data coming out of programs like Calgary Economic Development runs a reskilling program called Edge Up, which did a major mapping, I want to say like six or seven years ago of the top like displaced careers in the city and actually figured out like how do you move a geophysicist into a new career as a data scientist and really mapped like what are the top five displaced roles?

[00:12:59] **Chelsea:** What are the top five like in demand roles, and it's expanded significantly since then, and really like identified that programming to bring people up to the skills that they needed in the new economy. And there's a lot of data and proof points that they have around like re skilling that workforce, and them entering these new and exciting careers in tech.

[00:13:20] **Chelsea:** And you know better than anybody else, Zach, um, with Careers in Technology and Innovation, because this is like the bread and butter of your work too, but just seeing people really thrive in those. new areas and retaining them in those new sectors.

[00:13:33] **Lora:** What advice would you give someone who's thinking about investing in, say, education or reskilling, upskilling to tech or to a tech adjacent role?

[00:13:45] **Chelsea:** I think the advice I would give them is just that the opportunities to make a really meaningful career for yourself in Calgary are, the potential is limitless and often when I'm speaking with students, they don't quite understand the cool projects and work that they could have by staying here.

[00:14:07] **Chelsea:** Sometimes you still hear that like, they perspective, and maybe it's like the conversations that they're having around the dinner table too, where like our core industries are still quite traditional and they may not be familiar with some of the new opportunities that are

available to them. Most students don't understand that we have companies building robots that are going to disrupt the supply chain industry and warehouse distribution centers, like Adabotics, who's been featured in Time Magazine, or Routique, or the Rubik, or that we have hardware companies here, like Garmin, and smart technologies, And that these are leading, like, global solutions providers.

[00:14:49] **Chelsea:** We have the world's most accurate real time location system with zero key. We've, we have a team here that works for AMD that's building one of, like, the fastest supercomputers in the world. And we have Creative Industries and ARVR and AI companies and Learning management systems and social goodness platforms and people who are disrupting the fintech world like Endax and Simon and ZayZune and there's wellness platforms like Headversity, Kudos, Benevity, there's so, so many cool companies to work for that are doing like game changing work and they're doing it right here and they choose to do it right here because of the people here, the business environment here, and even like in clean tech and renewables, we're positioned to be a leader in that space in Canada, you know, companies who are doing like incredible groundbreaking work like Summit Nanotech and Carbon Upcycling, sports marketing companies like Stellar Allgo, digital transformation companies like that.

[00:15:47] **Chelsea:** Just the potential is for your career in Calgary is limitless and you truly can make anything of yourself here.

[00:15:56] **Zach:** Of that list. That was an amazing list of I believe all those companies are headquartered in a homegrown in Calgary. Do you see your work differently between attracting these global companies to set up North American headquarters here and the work that you do to help these companies scale from startup to being globally significant?

[00:16:17] **Chelsea:** Yeah, so we do offer services on both ends. And in my role, we spend, we know that 70 percent of investment in the city comes from local investors. So, we try to spend as much time or more time on business retention and expansion as we do on attraction.

[00:16:34] **Chelsea:** And lots of times the attraction pieces get really good. Headlines. So, it sometimes looks like it might be the other way around. And we have programs within our office that are really specifically geared towards local companies, those local headquarters who want to go global and gain global customers like the Trade Accelerator Program and our trade missions that we run throughout the year and then as well as the work that we do on the talent side.

[00:16:58] **Chelsea:** So our team runs over 60 talent activations throughout the year where they're truly trying to help Calgary companies like attract or find that talent that they're looking for, whether it's locally or throughout the globe through their many missions that they do.

[00:17:14] **Chelsea:** And they can come under that Calgary umbrella. So, there's a lot of services that fit both clients who have come from other markets or are homegrown locally.

[00:17:24] **Zach:** And what's missing? What do you feel if there is one thing that we could move the needle on that would really improve the Calgary ecosystem or something that we're a little bit falling behind on? What would that be?

[00:17:37] **Chelsea:** I know what, based on the calls that I have with the decision makers here locally and business leaders, something that they would say is encouraging our corporations to be a first customer. To take a chance on innovation and to really like support our startups and our scale up businesses, because oftentimes you'll hear from local companies that they've had

to go acquire a global customer and A, it was easier and B, that's what they needed to be able to sell to a local company.

[00:18:11] **Lora:** On the other end, what makes you the most excited about what's going on in Calgary?

[00:18:14] **Chelsea:** What we're seeing in talent attraction, I think, is incredible for Calgary. Like, we're always competing with other, like, really top tech markets. When people come to us and they're evaluate or we go to them and they're evaluating an expansion and we say, Hey, can I tell you a little bit more about Calgary so that we can be, you know, a consideration for your investment to like they're evaluating Seattle, New York, Vancouver, Toronto, they've maybe never even heard of Calgary and the fact that.

[00:18:46] **Chelsea:** Now we can say, like, that we're one of the fastest growing tech talent markets in North America, that we're one of the fastest growing Gen Z populations, which is their next generation of their workforce, that we're seeing the highest immigration levels in the country, and over a 60 percent growth in our tech talent pool, that's what's really standing out for us to be able to put ourselves on a global scale.

[00:19:08] **Chelsea:** And I think it's super exciting when I go now to a local business leader and they tell me, I think we've solved the issue around like our junior tech talent. Like we're, there's enough, like we have a. incredible candidates when, when we put a roll out there, or we talked to another company who's coming from a major tech market and they were like, we just, we posted it in both markets just to see what would happen and in Calgary, we had 200 applicants and in our city, we had eight, you know, like that's really, really exciting.

[00:19:38] **Zach:** Yeah, I see every day the attraction of people from all over the globe. There's some things I would want to talk about it, but I'm very surprised that you're saying that we have the fastest growing Gen Z market because the thing I see in the headlines is that we're still seeing, and we had an intern this summer as well, my perception is Gen Z still wants to leave Calgary because of the lack of opportunity. So that is surprising to me that you're saying that.

[00:20:06] **Chelsea:** Yeah, and statistically, like, if you look at data that's coming from StatsCan, like, those net migration rates we're seeing, what's really interesting is we've always been really favorable for seeing, like, you know, international migration, but we're really seeing a push out from some of the, less affordable tech markets in Canada, too so we're seeing a really positive growth from other major markets in Canada, and that's super exciting.

[00:20:33] **Zach:** And that trend is as strong in the Gen Z market.

[00:20:37] **Chelsea:** Yeah. And I think it has a lot to do with Calgary's like, the evolution that we've been going through as we're transforming and diversifying our economy and the perceptions that people are starting to have around the globe are really changing.

[00:20:50] **Chelsea:** Maybe we're not just a one trick city anymore, and there's a lot of opportunity here for people.

[00:20:57] **Zach:** Yeah, just this week we had two of our members, one from Bangladesh, tons of technology experience, who finally landed their role, and one from Iran, who is doing a transition from being a teacher to a marketer, and they both landed their roles in the tech market, so there's opportunity, there's a significant cultural differences that they had to get through in order to get there in multi months. Do you find that as well that still employers are favoring those of Canadian work experience? And if so, what we can do to make that better?

[00:21:27] **Chelsea:** I don't know firsthand. What I do know is from speaking with leaders in HR that they do still feel that that can be a trend.

[00:21:38] **Chelsea:** People in a hiring role who have that influence. There's a lot of education that could happen to help us overcome that. And what most people don't understand is that we are, or don't know, it's always surprising to people to learn that we are the third most diverse city in Canada. Over 175 languages are spoken here.

[00:21:58] **Chelsea:** Over 245 ethnic origins are represented. So, we are so, so diverse in the people who call Calgary home. And that is the face of Calgary. So, I think antiquated HR practices just don't have a place here anymore.

[00:22:17] **Zach:** I think we'd agree. You know, when we started Careers in Technology and Innovation, it was predominantly people pivoting careers from other industries.

[00:22:24] **Zach:** And that is a strong subset of the population. But more and more, AR is people that are new to Calgary that come with technology experience, also people from other parts of the nation. Obviously, we've expanded to other areas as well. And it's been such a gift personally to meet and make friendships with people from all sorts of backgrounds and be able to experience that sort of diversity.

[00:22:49] **Zach:** And I think that combined with the spirit that you're speaking of, Chelsea, I think it makes a really, really exciting talent pool as we move forward. It's only going to become more diverse. And as the diversity comes in, they have relationships with all over the globe as well.

[00:23:04] **Lora:** We were really interested to hear about Calgary.

[00:23:07] **Lora:** We're also curious about your role as an economic developer. Everything you've described is so interesting. So can you tell us a little bit more about what does it mean to have, to be an economic developer?

[00:23:18] **Chelsea:** Yes. So traditionally speaking, an economic development agency or an economic development officer is just somebody who promotes sustained growth in a region.

[00:23:29] **Chelsea:** And that can show up in a lot of different ways. So, the most obvious way, it's called BRIA. So that's Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction. So, supporting the growth of businesses in your region. And our organization is a little more multifaceted than that. So, we have everything in our organization from like brand and storytelling and global campaigns to, you know, the talent.

[00:23:57] **Chelsea:** work on the talent strategy and the re skilling programs are like work integrated learning program that's run out of our office. We have real estate support for businesses. We have funding support for businesses. We have the go global team, the trade team who helps with global growth. And we have a team that works on the economic strategy and stewards, the economic strategy for the city of Calgary.

[00:24:21] **Chelsea:** So, there's, I think, economic development in itself, like. It can be quite a multifaceted career depending on what you're interested in. It's not just economists. In fact, I think we only have like one proper economist in our organization. So at Calgary Economic Development, specifically our mandate I mentioned is is really to promote that long term economic success and shared prosperity for the city of Calgary and my role specifically is to really connect with government, community, industry leaders to help accelerate the growth of the tech and innovation ecosystem, but I have colleagues who work in all of our key sectors are really focused in on their ecosystems, and what that normally looks like is you might spend a

day with local investors trying to understand their challenges, trying to understand what their strategic growth plans are, and making sure you can connect them with the right resources, information, and um, data programming to help them be able to successfully do so.

[00:25:24] **Chelsea:** It's really like an enabling or a catalyst type role because you've built those connections throughout the ecosystem, community, government, and have a wealth of resources and information. It's really about that facilitation to help them along their journey with their growth. And then we spend some of our time on international missions where we're traveling to key markets around the world where we see opportunities for investors and decision makers to help us further grow the community. So, there's a lot that goes into, into those projects as well. Yeah, we have an amazing story to share in Calgary. And essentially we are all just storytellers. And we get to really put our city on the map and help create economic success. And, and we believe in this community and the prosperity that it can offer others.

[00:26:16] **Chelsea:** And it's just, I feel really fortunate to be able to share that with the world and to help contribute a little bit to the growth and the future that hopefully we'll see that young talent stay and find the opportunities that they're looking for here.

[00:26:32] **Zach:** When you started your career, were you like, I'm going to become an economic developer?

[00:26:37] **Chelsea:** I still don't even know if I think of myself as an economic developer. No, not at all. I started my career in food marketing, in sports communication, in like hospitality. My major is in marketing and communications. And so that was where I spent the first leg of my career. And because I was coming out of school at a time where you, you were at the forefront of digital marketing it wasn't even being taught in school. Like, you know, there were all of these opportunities within companies that were being, these roles that were being created for the first time. So, I was always on the forefront of like digital and technology and moving through roles that were being created at companies for the very first time, and you were having to like really figure it out and learn on your own and find your own professional development to succeed.

[00:27:31] **Chelsea:** And I started in a traditional marketing and communications role when I came to CED, Calgary Economic Development, I was a digital marketing manager for a number of years. A lot of some of our global campaigns, some of our like by local campaigns, a lot of our talent attraction work because that's where we were at as a city at that time.

[00:27:51] **Chelsea:** And then there was an opportunity that came up in business development where we were creating the interactive digital media portfolio. And so that was our first like dedicated tech portfolio. And I moved onto the creative industries team to support them and then later into the enterprise technology portfolio role.

[00:28:12] **Chelsea:** So, honestly, it just evolved really naturally and, you know, just aligned with my core values in building community and connecting people and supporting entrepreneurship and I couldn't have predicted where. I would end up today, but I can't think of a single person in our organization who came in and they were like, I have an economic development certification I'm qualified for this role. Like that's most of us come in because we truly believe in the city and the potential and the quality of life that you can have in building a life here.

[00:28:45] **Zach:** When you're hiring for your team. Or if you're hiring a new role, what are the top things you would look for someone in your organization in an economic development related role?

[00:28:54] **Chelsea:** In the roles on our team, it's interesting because people have come from ecosystem, from government, from industry, so it really just depends on the person. Like, do you have a passion for the work? Do you have a passion for the city? And are you knowledgeable about the sector? That's really helpful too.

[00:29:11] **Chelsea:** Some people have like a little bit of experience in community economic development or entrepreneurship. There's no one path. I think for anybody who's found a career within our organization, there's such a diversity of backgrounds and education.

[00:29:30] **Lora:** Everyone I've met at Calgary Economic Development are great storytellers, and I think that's one thing that I've really noticed with everyone on your team, is everyone tells a great story.

[00:29:39] **Lora:** Maybe it's just because everyone's so passionate, and I think probably attributes to our success as well, or the success of the city's growth, is just being just such undaunted champions for the city.

[00:29:50] **Chelsea:** Yeah, I think that would really like... Ring through of all of my colleagues that, you know, the people that I know who have come into the organization, that's certainly an underlying theme and, and we do a little bit of measurement around like, uh, employee engagement measurements and that's always like the number one thing is people are incredibly passionate about the mission and the mandate and the work that we get to do.

[00:30:13] **Zach:** I'm a little bit curious. Do you look at other metropolitan cities in particular economic development organizations as competitors? Do you collaborate with them? How does that relationship work?

[00:30:25] **Chelsea:** A little bit of both, honestly. Like, certainly we compete because, you know, our mandate is to land an investment here, right? Or retain a company here. We want those jobs to be local. We collaborate a lot more within our own region. I would say. So, Alberta and the Prairies, there's a lot of collaboration. And it is kind of funny to say, but we're competing against the other markets, right?

[00:30:53] **Zach:** Interesting. Do you feel like livability has been a really strong argument for, I think, almost like a decade?

[00:31:00] **Zach:** But just over the last six months or a year, especially the members of our community are, they're saying that Calgary is becoming unlivable. Is the livability Pitch changing in your mind?

[00:31:13] **Chelsea:** You know, we've been ranked as one of the most livable cities in the world, top 10, for 15 years. Every year for 15 years, we've been in the top 10 most livable cities in the world ranking by the global economist intelligence unit.

[00:31:30] **Chelsea:** So, we know that we live in a livable city, and we score perfectly in areas like infrastructure, education, where we don't is actually on environment. The cold can scare some people off. Not everyone loves winter. The conversation around affordability is not unique. I would say to Calgary, we are seeing an increase in housing prices is generally what that refers to, but that's not unique to Calgary, so that's happening all over Canada, and we actually still, our average home price is still more affordable than the national average, it's still more affordable than obviously Vancouver, Toronto, but Ottawa, Montreal, so people are feeling the pinch of globally, inflation, rising interest rates.

[00:32:21] **Chelsea:** Increased housing costs. That's not really unique to our city. Although, you know, there's tons of conversations around how we continue to be a livable city and how we

you know, support the people in our city as we look to grow and as we want to grow our sectors, as we want to diversify our city, as we want to grow our population.

[00:32:41] **Chelsea:** Like, how do we continue to be an affordable city? And I think that the, the city of Calgary is really focused on that. And you hear our mayor recently was talking about, you know, utility prices being a huge priority right now. So, there's lots of work being done to maintain that affordability. Yeah. So, yeah.

[00:33:00] **Chelsea:** A little bit of mixed feedback, but I think that again, like what we're experiencing isn't unique in North America, everybody's feeling that in every city.

[00:33:10] **Zach:** Yeah agreed, and I want to, you know, livability. I think I was being a little bit narrow focused when I asked that question because it really is the affordability conversation over those other aspects.

[00:33:19] **Zach:** So, it's much more broad. You know, for me, I went to school out east and I came back. And there was kind of two reasons. One was the spirit of community and the second it was just proximity to the mountains. So, yeah, I think, you know, Calgary also, and see if you agree with this, the real estate market was so well priced for so long.

[00:33:40] **Zach:** that it was just so attractive. And now it's just starting to come back to more medians and averages.

[00:33:45] **Chelsea:** Yeah. And we're still not, you know, we're not even at that national average yet, but you know, like it has gone up over the last couple of years. We're certainly feeling that. And with the lower inventory, yeah, that's something that we'll have to really stay on top of.

[00:34:00] **Chelsea:** But. You're right, like livability overall. We're so fortunate to have 10 world class ski resorts within three hours, like a city that has really focused on quality of life where we have the most urban bike paths and park spaces in the North America and three hundred and thirty three days of sunshine a year.

[00:34:21] **Chelsea:** Like we're so fortunate for a lot of the aspects of the quality of life that we get to live in Calgary.

[00:34:27] **Zach:** If you had a crystal ball, what would be your prediction for Calgary for 10 years from now?

[00:34:31] **Chelsea:** I feel like I can not even predict my life often, like three years out.

[00:34:37] **Zach:** What would be your dreams and aspirations then?

[00:34:39] **Chelsea:** There's so many sectors that I'm super excited about. But that, like, honestly, I couldn't have even dreamed up, like, a year or two or three or five years ago, like, the conversations that we're having around, like, our potential as a leader in AI, as a leader in deep tech, as a leader in quantum, like, what we've seen happen with the quantum city at the University of Calgary, like, these are things I couldn't have dreamed up five years ago.

[00:35:03] **Chelsea:** And I'm super excited about the direction we're going. And I think as long as we continue to be a city with the mindset that we have where we're going to solve global challenges. You know, we want to be a leader in solving the world's problems around like food security, cyber security, and just as long as we continue to support innovation and stay focused on whatever the world is throwing at us next, like climate and renewables, I think that our potential is really limitless.

[00:35:37] **Lora:** What's your advice to someone new to survive winter?

[00:35:39] **Chelsea:** Layers. Layers are so important. Use the plus 15 system if you work downtown. And honestly, you know, when I moved here from Saskatchewan, I thought our

winters were so mild. It's all about an adjustment game. So, layer up, number one piece of advice. Thank you so much.

[00:35:58] **Lora:** Thank you so much.

[00:36:00] **Chelsea:** Thank you. Thank you for having me. And you're both such incredible industry advocates and community leaders. And I appreciate the work that you're both doing as well.

[00:36:12] **Lora:** I really admire the work that Calgary Economic Development has done over the last few years. The city has changed significantly. It feels like there's more opportunities and they've been a big part in driving that.

[00:36:22] **Zach:** Yeah, I couldn't agree more, and we benefit from the initiatives that they do, and I think Chelsea did such a great job, not just describing the benefits of Calgary, but providing examples and detail about what's going on in the ecosystem, and a great starting point for people that are looking to research and learn more.

[00:36:41] **Lora:** And a lot of data. So one of the things I really appreciated about Calgary Economic Development is they collect data, they share research reports, and we'll put links to some of those resources in our resources, along with some of links to the Edge Up, program to Zach's careers in technology and innovation to SAIT programs that lead people to careers in tech as well as to SAIT's economic development program as well. For anybody that's interested in learning more, make sure to check out the resources.

[00:37:13] **Zach:** Thanks for listening.

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