



Labour Market Bulletin

Saskatchewan

September 2021



This Labour Market Bulletin provides an analysis of Labour Force Survey results for the province of Saskatchewan, including Regina-Moose Mountain, Swift Current-Moose Jaw, Saskatoon-Biggar, Yorkton-Melville and Prince Albert and Northern economic regions.

OVERVIEW

Saskatchewan's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic slowed considerably during the July to September period (Q3-2021), with the province posting the second lowest employment growth rate Canada-wide. Total employment was up 1,000 (+0.2%) compared to Q2-2021, with gains coming exclusively in full-time employment (+5,200).

Annually, employment was up 11,100 workers (+2.0%) in Q3-2021. However, compared with pre-pandemic Q4-2019, employment in Q3-2021 remained down by 11,100 jobs (-1.9%).

In a positive milestone, private sector employment exceeded the pre-pandemic level for the first time, up 2,000 positions compared to Q4-2019.

Self-employment continues to lag, down 8,800 jobs (-9.4%) from Q3-2020, and 17,200 jobs (-16.9%) from Q4-2019.¹ This category of workers, which includes many small business owners, has been disproportionately affected since the beginning of the pandemic.²

Saskatchewan Quarterly Labour Force Statistics

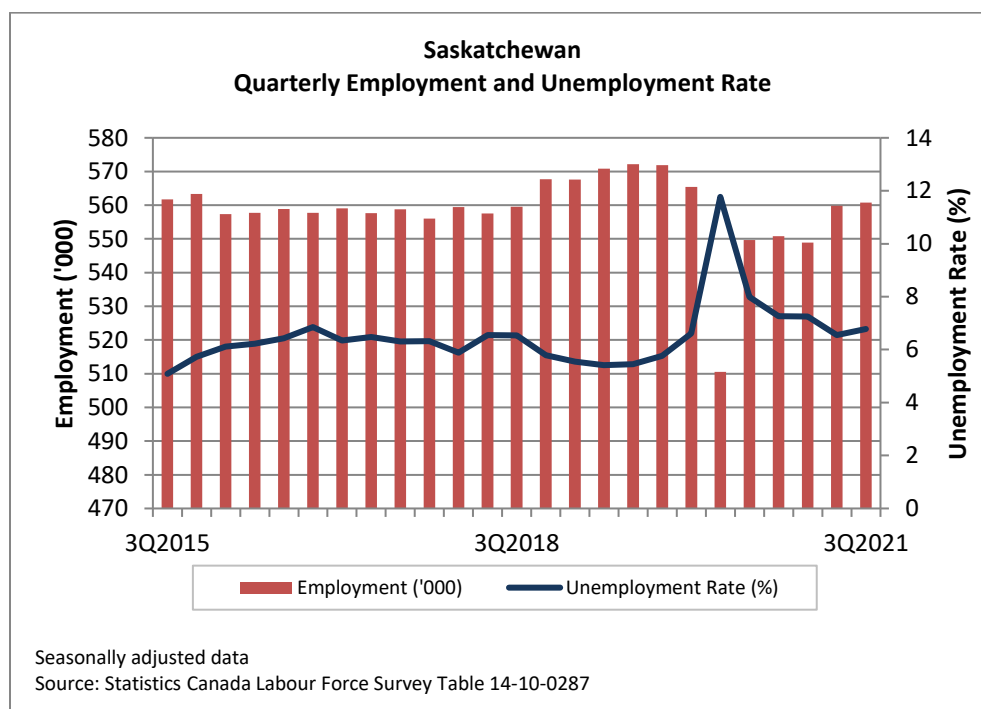
Seasonally adjusted data	3rd Quarter 2021	2nd Quarter 2021	3rd Quarter 2020	Quarterly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	889.7	889.3	887.9	0.4	0.0	1.8	0.2
Labour Force ('000)	601.6	599.0	597.4	2.6	0.4	4.2	0.7
Employment ('000)	560.8	559.8	549.7	1.0	0.2	11.1	2.0
Full-Time ('000)	454.4	449.2	452.5	5.2	1.2	1.9	0.4
Part-Time ('000)	106.4	110.6	97.2	-4.2	-3.8	9.2	9.5
Unemployment ('000)	40.8	39.2	47.7	1.6	4.1	-6.9	-14.5
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.8	6.5	8.0	0.3	-	-1.2	-
Participation Rate (%)	67.6	67.4	67.3	0.2	-	0.3	-
Employment Rate (%)	63.0	62.9	61.9	0.1	-	1.1	-

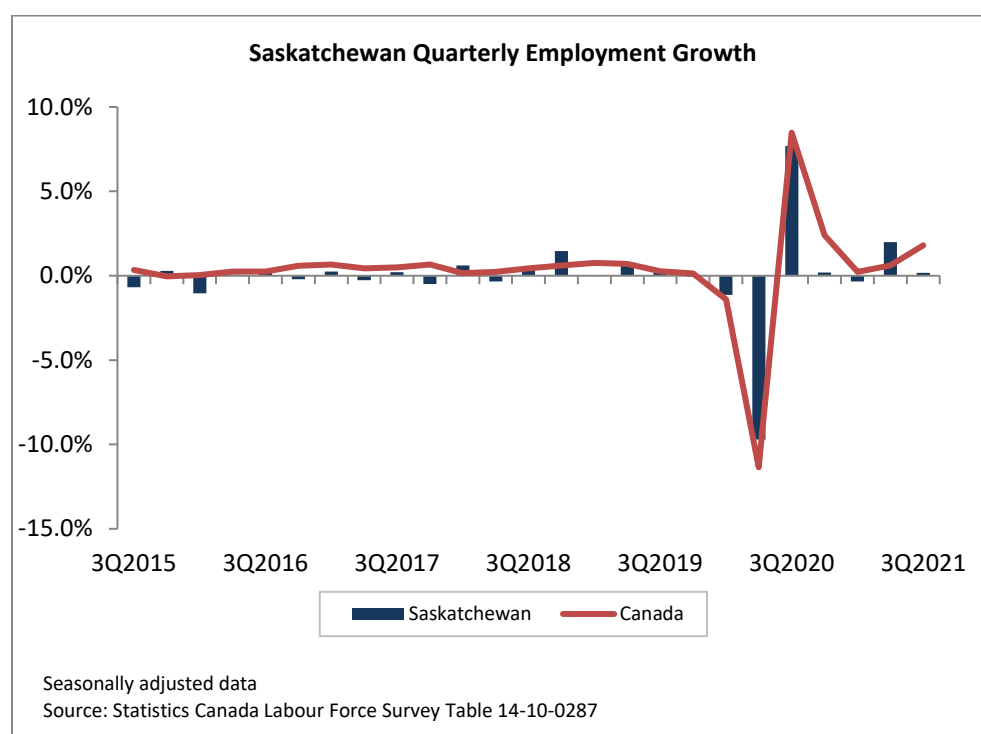
Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

Vaccination rates continued to increase during Q3-2021. As of October 13, 76% of those 12 and over were fully vaccinated.³ However, the lifting of public health measures in July proved premature and active cases soared in Q3-2021. This led to the reinstatement of some public health measures mid-September. As of October 13, Saskatchewan's rate of active cases per population was the highest in the country.⁴

In Q3-2021, Saskatchewan's unemployment rate increased to 6.8%, which is historically a relatively high rate for the province. However, at the peak of COVID-19's labour market disruption in Q2-2020, the provincial unemployment rate reached 11.8%, Saskatchewan's highest rate on record since the current Statistics Canada series began in 1976.





Unemployment by Major Demographic Group

Saskatchewan Quarterly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally adjusted data	3rd Quarter 2021 (%)	2nd Quarter 2021 (%)	3rd Quarter 2020 (%)	Quarterly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	6.8	6.5	8.0	0.3	-1.2
25 years and over	6.2	5.7	6.7	0.5	-0.5
Men - 25 years and over	7.3	6.3	7.0	1.0	0.3
Women - 25 years and over	4.9	5.1	6.3	-0.2	-1.4
15 to 24 years	10.1	11.3	15.5	-1.2	-5.4
Men - 15 to 24 years	11.0	12.8	18.5	-1.8	-7.5
Women - 15 to 24 years	9.0	9.9	12.2	-0.9	-3.2

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

Saskatchewan workers aged 25 years and over continue to fare better than their younger counterparts (15 to 24 years). Younger workers have historically experienced unemployment rates as much as double that of their older counterparts, a trend amplified earlier during the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally, young men appear particularly vulnerable to employment downturns, as seen in Q3-2020 when their unemployment rate reached 18.5%, one-third higher than that of young women. Since then, as Saskatchewan's economy has improved from its pandemic lows, the unemployment rates of the major demographic groups have continue to converge. In Q3-2021, the unemployment rate gap between young men and young women was 2.0 percentage points, less than that seen between men and women aged 25 years and above.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

On the quarter, employment in Saskatchewan's goods-producing sector fell by 3,600 (-2.7%), while employment in the services-producing sector increased by 4,700 (+1.1%). Employment levels in the goods-producing sector have not reached pre-pandemic levels, still down (-9.5%) from Q4-2019. However, the gains in the services-producing sector represent an overall increase of 0.6% compared to pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, staff shortages persist in **accommodation and food services** and **healthcare and social assistance**, as many of these workers opt for new careers due to wage constraints, irregular hours, or burnout.

Saskatchewan Quarterly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally adjusted data ('000)	3rd Quarter 2021	2nd Quarter 2021	3rd Quarter 2020	Quarterly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	560.8	559.8	549.7	1.0	0.2	11.1	2.0
Goods-producing sector	129.6	133.2	133.9	-3.6	-2.7	-4.3	-3.2
Agriculture	28.5	31.6	35.5	-3.1	-9.8	-7.0	-19.7
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	19.1	20.1	20.7	-1.0	-5.0	-1.6	-7.7
Utilities	6.6	5.7	6.0	0.9	15.8	0.6	10.0
Construction	42.5	43.8	40.2	-1.3	-3.0	2.3	5.7
Manufacturing	33.0	32.0	31.6	1.0	3.1	1.4	4.4
Services-producing sector	431.2	426.5	415.8	4.7	1.1	15.4	3.7
Trade	94.3	91.1	83.9	3.2	3.5	10.4	12.4
Transportation and warehousing	23.1	22.3	24.6	0.8	3.6	-1.5	-6.1
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	28.6	26.5	29.3	2.1	7.9	-0.7	-2.4
Professional, scientific and technical services	27.5	28.8	26.2	-1.3	-4.5	1.3	5.0
Business, building and other support services	15.4	15.6	16.7	-0.2	-1.3	-1.3	-7.8
Educational services	46.0	46.4	44.5	-0.4	-0.9	1.5	3.4
Health care and social assistance	86.5	86.4	80.8	0.1	0.1	5.7	7.1
Information, culture and recreation	19.3	17.5	18.0	1.8	10.3	1.3	7.2
Accommodation and food services	29.8	29.0	27.7	0.8	2.8	2.1	7.6
Other services	25.5	27.1	29.7	-1.6	-5.9	-4.2	-14.1
Public administration	35.2	35.8	34.3	-0.6	-1.7	0.9	2.6

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table T14-10-0355, formerly CANSIM 282-0088

Within the goods-producing sector, year-over-year employment was down significantly in **agriculture** (-7,000 or -19.7%). In 2021, prolonged drought conditions caused harvest to begin early and progress quickly as many farmers tried to preserve yields.⁵ The estimated average crop yield for canola this year is 21 bushels per acre, which is two-thirds of the ten-year average yield of 34 bushels per acre.⁶ Overall production is estimated to have declined by as much as 47% from 2020.⁷ While elevated commodity prices may help cushion the financial impact on growers over the short term, ranchers were also affected by the harsh conditions as less feed was available for livestock. As of September 1, producers affected by drought will be eligible to apply for part of the \$119M of funding available through the AgriRecovery program.⁸

Employment in the **construction** industry decreased on the quarter (-3.0%) and increased by 2,300 jobs (+5.7%) year-over-year, as the Government of Saskatchewan continues to focus on construction as an avenue for economic recovery. In addition to the new and expanding canola crush plants announced this year, another major private sector construction project will begin shortly. BHP, the world's second largest mining company by revenue, announced that it will invest a further \$7.5 billion into the Jansen potash mine east of Saskatoon, supporting approximately 3,500 construction jobs through to 2027. BHP indicates that its workforce will be gender-balanced and 20% will be Indigenous.⁹ Residential construction is also up 34% year-to-date compared to 2020.¹⁰ According to the Conference Board of Canada, housing starts in the province were up 28% in 2020 from 2019 to 3,100 units, with 5,000 units forecasted for 2021. Residential construction is being driven by a combination of higher than average household savings and lower than average mortgage rates as a result of the pandemic.

Saskatchewan's resource extraction industry (**forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas**) lost 1,500 jobs year-over-year, primarily in mining. Mining jobs are expected to return as potash demand increases. Indeed, BHP expects to add 600 jobs at its Jansen potash mine starting in 2027.

Saskatchewan is the second-largest producer of oil and gas by volume in the country. Rock-bottom oil prices in the early pandemic had an impact on jobs in the industry. Prices have since rebounded, and now production has started to rise. In July 2021, oil production in Saskatchewan increased by 9.9% compared to July 2020. Nevertheless, year-to-date oil production is roughly equivalent to 2020 levels, continuing the lower production trend that began with the pandemic.¹¹ The Husky Midstream Saskatchewan Gathering System Expansion project is now complete and adds new shipping capacity of up to 48,000 barrels per day.¹²

Turning to the services-producing sector, employment in Saskatchewan's **retail and wholesale trade** industry increased 3,200 jobs (+3.5%) on the month, outpacing the national increase of 2.5%. Annual gains in this industry come as vaccination rates rose, COVID-19 public health restrictions eased, and outlets resumed full in-store operations. Aside from workers returning to jobs post-lockdown, new retail businesses are also adding to employment numbers. For example, Prairie Sky Co-op recently opened in Weyburn. The new Home Centre has a dedicated Contractor Centre, a drive-thru lumberyard and indoor lumber storage.¹³ Moreover, the number of retail cannabis stores in Saskatchewan continues to increase. Notably, High Tide will open five retail locations in Regina under the name "Canna Cabana" by the end of the year.¹⁴ Also, two new cannabis stores in Estevan added 11 new jobs.^{15,16}

Employment in the **health care and social assistance** industry changed little on the quarter (+100), while showing notable growth on a year-over-year basis (+5,700). However, the health care industry grappled with the fourth wave of the pandemic, which strained already under-staffed health care facilities in the province. According to the Saskatchewan Health Authority, there are labour shortages in both urban and rural care centres. The Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon lost nurses, and some rural hospitals are already diverting patients to larger centres due to a lack of nurses and physicians.¹⁷ Saskatchewan Polytechnic is aiming to address shortages in x-ray and laboratory positions by doubling the number of seats in the combined laboratory and x-ray technologists program.¹⁸

While the **accommodation and food services** industry welcomed changes to public health orders that lifted all restrictions in July, rising fourth wave cases required partial reinstatements as of October 1. Despite adding 2,100 jobs year-over-year, employment in the industry remains 9,700 below pre-pandemic Q4-2019 (-24.6%). Some

restaurant owners continue to face staffing challenges. Businesses are reporting staffing shortages of 15% to 20%, as former workers may have new jobs or no longer want to work in the restaurant industry.^{19,20}

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

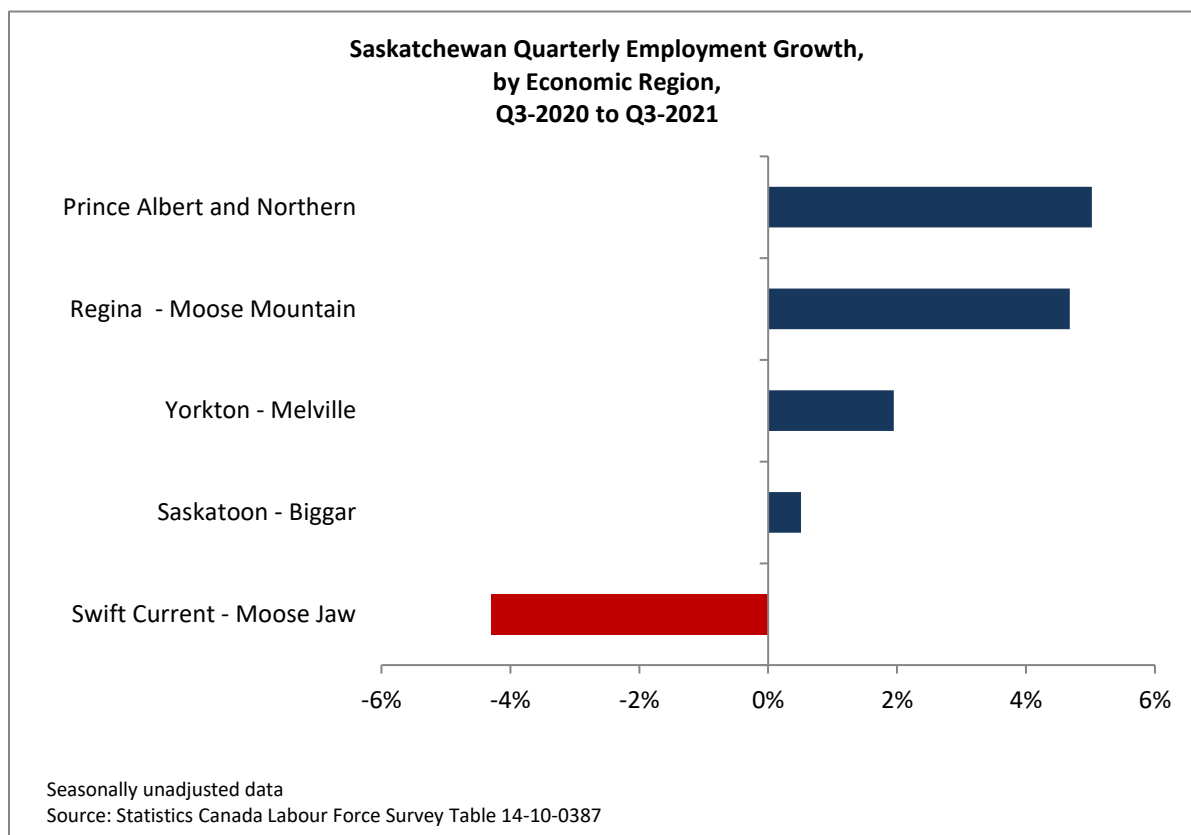
On an annual basis, employment is up in four of Saskatchewan's five economic regions compared to Q3-2020, even with the province suffering from the pandemic's fourth wave. Only Swift Current – Moose Jaw saw job losses on the year -2,300 (-4.3%), due to weakness across the services-producing sector. Regina – Moose Mountain led the regions by adding 8,100 jobs (+4.7%) overall.

Saskatchewan Quarterly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

Seasonally unadjusted data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	3rd Quarter 2021 ('000)	3rd Quarter 2020 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	3rd Quarter 2021 (%)	3rd Quarter 2020 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Saskatchewan	566.5	554.4	2.2	6.7	8.2	-1.5
Economic Regions						
Regina - Moose Mountain	181.2	173.1	4.7	6.5	7.6	-1.1
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	51.2	53.5	-4.3	8.1	6.3	1.8
Saskatoon - Biggar	197.2	196.2	0.5	7.7	9.7	-2.0
Yorkton - Melville	36.6	35.9	1.9	4.2	5.5	-1.3
Prince Albert and Northern	100.4	95.6	5.0	5.1	8.2	-3.1

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0387, formerly CANSIM 282-0122



The **Regina-Moose Mountain** region posted moderate employment gains (+8,100 or +4.7%) on the year. Many restaurants and hotels in Regina are struggling to find employees. Some businesses are offering incentives in an attempt to fill the vacancies.²¹ The Redvers Health Centre has temporarily closed its 24-hour emergency and acute care services due to challenges with staffing. The Health Centre will be closed until further notice.²²

Looking forward, The Government of Saskatchewan plans to create 600 long-term care beds in a new Regina facility. The Saskatchewan Health Authority will own and operate the facility, the construction timelines of which will be announced later this year.²³ Meanwhile, the Government of Canada is spending \$7.8M through the Rapid Housing Initiative, to create 29 affordable homes in Regina. The renovation of the recently vacated YMCA is an option for the project.²⁴

In travel and transportation news, Siemens Transportation Group Inc. is building a new terminal for its company Kindersley Transport at Pasqua Business Park. The site, just north of Regina, will include a new 40,000-square-foot warehouse.²⁵ According to the Regina Airport Authority, the number of passengers flying in and out of Regina has tripled when compared to a few of months ago. The increase is due to the loosening of restrictions and the recent addition of flights.²⁶

Meanwhile, Carry the Kettle Nakoda Nation recently opened the Chief Long Lodge Education Centre to help men and women, aged 16 to 21, obtain their Grade 12 diploma. There are also plans for the centre to offer post-secondary education in the future.²⁷

Year-over-year employment in **Saskatoon-Biggar** grew 1,000 (+0.5%) as the fourth wave continues to plague the province. However, the hospitality industry in Saskatoon is still struggling to hire people back to work. Some businesses are down 15-20% in staffing.²⁸ The Battlefords Chamber of Commerce board of directors have decided to postpone the annual Battlefords Business Excellence Awards gala in 2021 due to COVID-19. The gala is set to return in 2022.²⁹

On a more positive note, in manufacturing, a new \$65M grain-cleaning terminal recently opened in the Town of Delisle. The new terminal can receive grain and pulses from producers and can clean the entire unit in half a day, allowing products to be exported to international markets.³⁰

Moving to construction-related news, Saskatchewan-based PCL Construction will be providing construction management services for the Saskatoon Remand Centre expansion project. The project will create around 600 construction jobs and is expected to be complete by spring 2024.³¹ Northern Nutrients is building a new \$25M fertilizer manufacturing plant near Saskatoon. Construction is set to be completed by early 2022, at which time the company plans to hire around 30 new employees.³² The federal and provincial governments are spending \$5.3M to upgrade the water treatment plant in the Town of Outlook. Some of the new improvements include enhancing flow through the reservoirs and the addition of UV disinfection.³³

Compared to Q3-2020, 4,800 (+5.0%) more people were employed in the **Prince Albert and Northern** region where COVID-19 has significantly affected some communities in the far north. The Community Heritage Centre in Prince Albert recently reopened after being closed for 16 months due to the pandemic. Senior citizens use the centre to visit, play card games and dance to live music.³⁴ The North American Chuckwagon Championship

recently took place in Lloydminster. The event was the first of its kind in Saskatchewan since the pandemic started.³⁵

Looking at manufacturing, One Sky Forest Products Ltd. is building a new \$250M Oriented Strand Board (OSB) plant in Prince Albert. The mill is expected to create 700 jobs.³⁶ Paper Excellence is spending \$550M to refurbish and upgrade the Prince Albert pulp mill. Restarting the mill is expected to create over 1,650 direct and indirect jobs.³⁷

Finally in construction news, the Prince Albert Water Utility recently purchased land for the construction of a new \$52.5M water treatment plant and pipeline with service to Shellbrook. If approved, construction of the project would begin in the fourth quarter of 2022.³⁸ The Government of Canada is providing \$38M to build a new kindergarten to Grade 12 school for the community of Moosomin First Nation. Construction is scheduled to begin this fall and be completed by the fall of 2023.³⁹ The federal and provincial governments provided \$2.4M to St. Brieux to upgrade the town's wastewater treatment system. The improvements will help the town expand, as the lagoon is currently at full capacity.⁴⁰

Note: In preparing this document, the authors have taken care to provide clients with labour market information that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since this document was published. Users are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect official policies of Employment and Social Development Canada.

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For information on the Labour Force Survey, please visit the Statistics Canada Web site at: www.statcan.gc.ca

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