



# Labour Market Bulletin

Ontario

March 2021



This Labour Market Bulletin provides an analysis of Labour Force Survey results for the province of Ontario, including the regions of Hamilton—Niagara Peninsula, Kingston—Pembroke, Kitchener—Waterloo—Barrie, London, Muskoka—Kawartha, Northeast, Northwest, Ottawa, Stratford—Bruce Peninsula, Toronto and Windsor—Sarnia.

## OVERVIEW

### Labour Force Trends – Ontario employment decreased in Q1 2021

- Employment decreased by 12,800 in Q1 2021
- Employment gains were entirely in full-time work (+87,200)
- The unemployment rate decreased 0.5 percentage points to 9.0%
- The unemployment rate for youth (aged 15 to 24) decreased 1.6 percentage points to 19.3%

Employment in Ontario fell by 12,800 (-0.2%) in Q1 2021 compared to the previous quarter, following two consecutive quarterly increases. The gains were entirely in full-time employment (+87,200; +1.5%), while part-time employment decreased by 100,100 (-7.8%). The number of unemployed Ontarians declined by 50,600 (-6.7%), however the size of the labour force also decreased by 63,400 (-0.8%). While the unemployment rate shrank 0.5 percentage points to 9.0%, the participation rate and employment rate both fell, sitting at 64.4% and 58.7%, respectively.

Youth employment in Ontario decreased by 44,700 (-4.8%) in Q1 2021, with majority of those losses coming from part-time employment (-42,100; -9.8%). Both males and females in this age group experienced similar losses, with male employment decreasing by 23,300 (-4.7%) and female employment decreasing by 21,500 (-4.9%). The youth unemployment rate decreased by 1.6 percentage points to 19.3% as youth unemployment declined by 34,900 (-14.2%). The labour force decreased by 79,600 (-6.8%) following two consecutive quarterly gains. Both the quarterly youth participation rate and employment rate decreased to 59.0% and 47.6%, respectively.

Between Q1 2021 and Q1 2020, employment in Ontario decreased by 148,000 (-2.0%) with losses in both full- and part-time employment. The majority of year-over-year losses were in part-time employment (-119,300; -9.1%), with a smaller decline in full-time employment (-28,700; -0.5%). The number of unemployed Ontarians increased

by 234,800 (+49.6%), pushing the unemployment rate up 2.9 percentage points from Q1 2020. The participation rate remained the same and the employment rate declined 1.8 percentage points year-over-year.

Employment in Canada increased by 44,100 (+0.2%) in Q1 2021 compared to Q4 2020, with the gains found entirely in full-time employment (+194,900; +1.3%). At the provincial level, Quebec, Ontario, Newfoundland and Saskatchewan all reported quarter-over-quarter losses in Q1. The national unemployment rate decreased by 0.4 percentage points to 8.4% as the number of unemployed Canadians decreased by 89,600 (-5.0%). The labour force also fell by 45,500 (-0.2%), while the participation rate fell marginally to 64.9%, and the employment rate remained unchanged at 59.4%.

The Bank of Canada left its policy interest rate at 0.25% on March 10, 2021, unchanged since March 27, 2020. The Bank will continue its quantitative easing program until the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is well underway and will adjust it as required to help bring inflation back to target on a sustainable basis.<sup>1</sup>

The United States (U.S.) total nonfarm payroll employment rose by 916,000 in March, and the unemployment rate fell to 6.0% from 6.2% in February.<sup>2</sup> The increase in payroll employment signals the revival of economic activity following COVID-19 containment efforts. Job growth was strongest in leisure and hospitality, public and private education, and construction.

#### Ontario Quarterly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally adjusted data	1st Quarter 2021	4th Quarter 2020	1st Quarter 2020	Quarterly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
<b>Population 15 + ('000)</b>	12,291.6	12,266.1	12,170.9	25.5	0.2	120.6	1.0
<b>Labour Force ('000)</b>	7,921.6	7,985.0	7,834.7	-63.4	-0.8	86.8	1.1
<b>Employment ('000)</b>	7,213.1	7,226.0	7,361.1	-12.8	-0.2	-148.0	-2.0
Full-Time ('000)	6,026.7	5,939.4	6,055.4	87.2	1.5	-28.7	-0.5
Part-Time ('000)	1,186.5	1,286.6	1,305.7	-100.1	-7.8	-119.3	-9.1
<b>Unemployment ('000)</b>	708.4	759.0	473.6	-50.6	-6.7	234.8	49.6
<b>Unemployment Rate (%)</b>	9.0	9.5	6.1	-0.5	-	2.9	-
<b>Participation Rate (%)</b>	64.4	65.1	64.4	-0.7	-	0.0	-
<b>Employment Rate (%)</b>	58.7	58.9	60.5	-0.2	-	-1.8	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

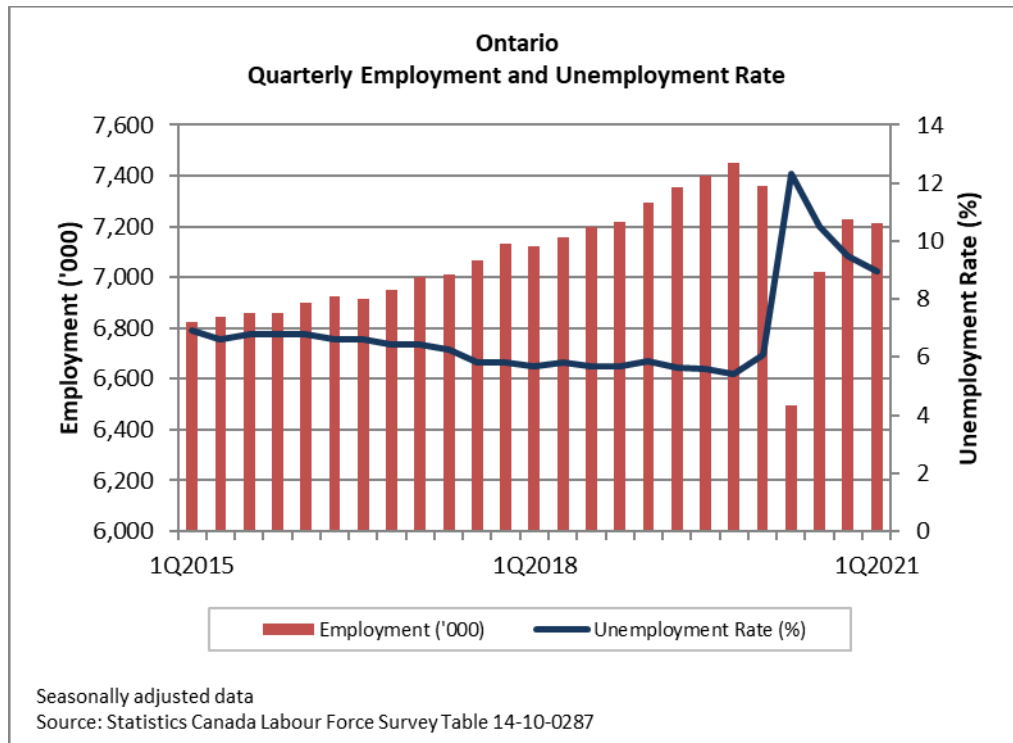
Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

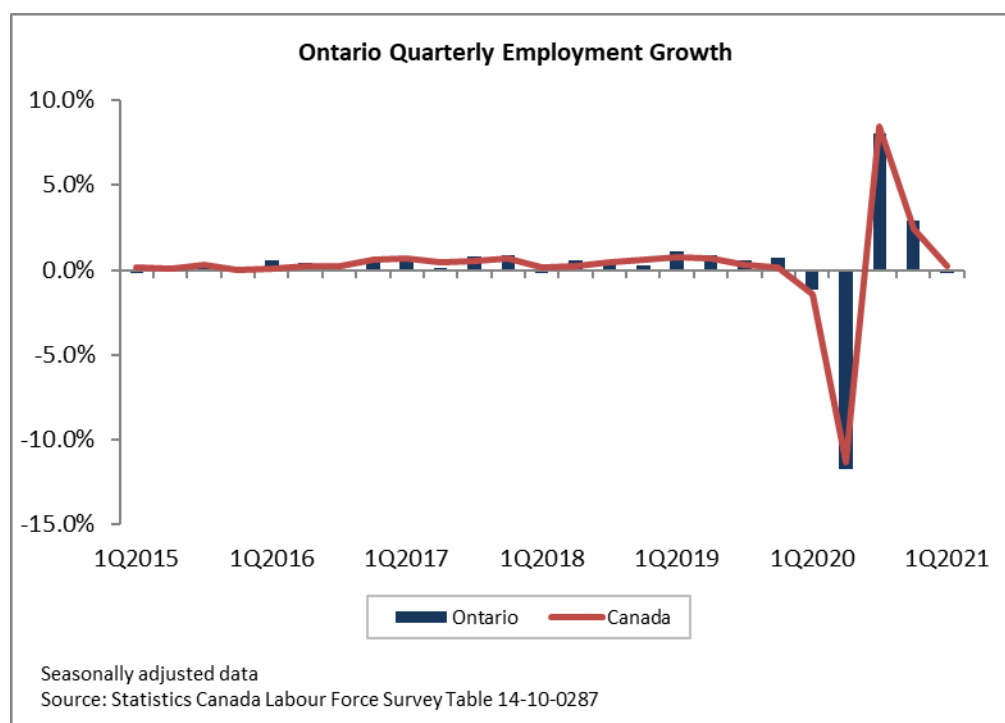
**Ontario Quarterly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age**

Seasonally adjusted data	1st Quarter 2021 (%)	4th Quarter 2020 (%)	1st Quarter 2020 (%)	Quarterly Variation	Yearly Variation
				(% points)	(% points)
<b>Total</b>	8.9	9.5	6.0	-0.6	2.9
<b>25 years and over</b>	7.3	7.5	5.0	-0.2	2.3
Men - 25 years and over	7.0	7.2	4.7	-0.2	2.3
Women - 25 years and over	7.6	7.9	5.4	-0.3	2.2
<b>15 to 24 years</b>	19.2	20.9	12.2	-1.7	7.0
Men - 15 to 24 years	18.0	18.6	12.3	-0.6	5.7
Women - 15 to 24 years	20.6	23.3	12.1	-2.7	8.5

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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





## EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

### Employment levels remain stable in Ontario's goods-producing sector in the first quarter of 2021

Employment in the Ontario's **goods-producing** sector remained stable between Q1 2021 and Q4 2020. While employment levels did not change in the goods-producing sector during this period, there were noteworthy movements within the sector. Employment increased in the construction (+10,500; +2.5%) and utilities (+400; +0.7%) industries, however, it fell in all other goods-producing industries, including agriculture (-6,500; -9.2%), forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas (-3,300; -8.7%), and manufacturing (-1,000; -0.1%).

Within the **construction** industry, employment levels grew by 10,500 (+2.0%) in Q1 2021. It is estimated that as much as 85% of construction activity that was underway before the province-wide state of emergency order came into effect on Boxing Day was able to continue during this period.<sup>3</sup> The projects that were delayed during this period were mainly commercial or residential projects that had not started and were put on hold.<sup>4</sup>

In mid-January, the Government of Ontario announced that any construction project funded by the federal or provincial governments could continue during the lockdown, as they were deemed essential.<sup>5</sup> In February, the Government of Canada pledged to spend \$5.9B on transit-related stimulus projects in the short-term, while also creating a permanent transit transfer worth \$3.0B a year for municipalities beginning in 2026.<sup>6</sup> In March, the federal government further promised to expand its Rapid Housing Initiative program to support housing providers with hundreds of new affordable housing units in Toronto this year.<sup>7</sup>

According to the February Ontario Construction Secretariat (OCS) Contractor Survey, just over a quarter of contractors' work was stopped, the highest such figure since May 2020.<sup>8</sup> As of February 10, all residential construction

activities or projects in Ontario were deemed essential and allowed to continue or restart.<sup>9</sup> Housing starts in Ontario averaged 84,600 in January and February 2021, increasing slightly from an average of 81,400 in Q4 2020.<sup>10</sup>

Major projects began in Q1 2021, including a new long-term care facility in Cornwall, creating up to 110 new jobs when it opens in 2022,<sup>11</sup> a \$300M high-rise construction project in London,<sup>12</sup> and the \$300M Eastern Ontario Regional Network Cell Gap Project. The Cell Gap Project is expected to create 3,000 new jobs with the construction of 300 new cellular towers and upgrades on 300 existing towers.<sup>13</sup>

Workforce levels in the Ontario **manufacturing** industry remained relatively stable from Q4 2020 to Q1 2021, falling by 1,000 (-0.1%). The IHS Markit Canada Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index rose to 58.5 in March 2021 from 57.9 in December 2020.<sup>14</sup> However, large segments of the manufacturing industry have been swept up in the global semiconductor shortage, which has impacted the auto manufacturing sub-industry in particular. Contributing factors include a significant uptick in demand for electronic goods, restrictions to trade on a global scale,<sup>15</sup> and a Samsung semiconductor facility in Texas closing for weeks due to winter storms in the state.<sup>16</sup> Temporary closures as a result of the global semiconductor shortage include the Stellantis Brampton and Windsor Assembly Plants,<sup>17</sup> the Alliston Honda plant,<sup>18</sup> the General Motors CAMI plant in Ingersoll,<sup>19</sup> and the Ford Oakville Assembly Plant.<sup>20</sup> Ontario motor vehicle manufacturing sales decreased nearly 10% on a monthly basis in January 2021 as a direct result of the slowdown in production at auto assembly plants.<sup>21</sup> In addition, Canadian light vehicle sales decreased 17% year-over-year in January 2021, and further showed a decrease of 10% year-over-year in February 2021, with Ontario observing the largest drop with a decline of over 20% over the year.<sup>22</sup>

The transportation manufacturing sub-industry met further challenges in Q1 2021. In February, JD Norman Industries, which supplied automotive parts to General Motors, closed its Windsor plant, affecting about 65 workers.<sup>23</sup> Also in February, De Havilland Aircraft of Canada Ltd. announced that it would indefinitely pause production of the Dash 8-400 aircraft at its Downsview factory in Toronto, as airlines re-evaluate their costs amid harsh market conditions, affecting about 500 employees.<sup>24</sup>

There were significant layoff news in other segments of the Ontario manufacturing industry over the quarter. Toolplas Systems Inc., an injection mold maker, closed both of its Windsor plants, resulting in the loss of 200 jobs.<sup>25</sup> As well, Canopy Growth Corp. announced layoffs for 75 staff in North America, the majority of which were at its Smiths Falls headquarters.<sup>26</sup>

In positive news for the Ontario manufacturing industry, Maple Lodge Farms plans to expand its Brampton facility and add a retail location, creating 400 jobs over the next five years.<sup>27</sup> In addition, on March 31, the governments of Canada and Ontario, the City of Toronto, and Sanofi Pasteur Limited announced a joint investment of \$925 M in a new vaccine manufacturing facility in Toronto, creating 300 jobs.<sup>28</sup>

Employment in the Ontario **agriculture** industry fell by 6,500 (-9.2%) in Q1 2021, as the impact of the pandemic continued to be felt by agricultural workers, particularly temporary foreign workers (TFWs). The first wave of migrant farm workers typically arrive in late January to work in greenhouses, followed by others in the spring. On March 16, the Government of Canada announced that after March 21, incoming TFWs would be able to complete their mandatory 14-day quarantine on-farm, and will not need to complete a three-day stay in a Government Authorized Accommodation (GAA), as long as they are asymptomatic and have private transportation.<sup>29</sup> Workers who rely on public transit will have to stay in a GAA while they wait for test results. It is estimated that 95% of

TFWs will be able to go directly to farms to self-isolate. For those that do require a GAA, the government intends to ensure employers and TFWs will not assume the quarantine cost.

On a year-over-year basis, employment grew slightly by 2,000 (+0.1%) in Q1 2021 in the goods-producing sector, compared to Q1 2020, on the strength of gains in manufacturing (+37,100; +5.0%). The construction sector reported an employment loss of 22,900 (-4.1%), and employment was also down in agriculture (-11,700; -15.5%).

### **Employment falls in services-producing sector, with accommodation and food services and trade leading decline**

Employment levels in the Ontario **services-producing** sector fell by 12,800 (-0.2%) from Q4 2020 to Q1 2021. The accommodation and food services industry observed the sharpest decline, as employment fell by 45,500 (-12.7%), while figures in the trade industry decreased by 41,700 (-3.9%). While there were steep declines in these industries, the majority of sectors-producing industries gained employment levels in Q1 2021, with the health care and social assistance (+23,400; +2.7%) industry leading the charge.

Employment in the **accommodation and food services** industry has been impacted severely due to provincial pandemic restrictions, falling by 45,500 (-12.7%) in Q1 2021 compared to the previous quarter. A province-wide lockdown that commenced on Boxing Day restricted restaurants and bars to remain open for takeout, delivery, or drive-through only.<sup>30</sup> As the lockdown gradually eased in Q1 2021, outdoor dining was permitted for regions in the Grey-Lockdown level of the five-tiered provincial framework as of March 20, while indoor dining rules were relaxed for Red-Control and Orange-Restrict levels.<sup>31</sup>

Sales in Ontario's food services and drinking places subsector fell by nearly 20% to \$1.34B in January 2021, as a direct result of the province-wide restrictions.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel announced during the quarter that it will permanently lay off about 70 workers,<sup>33</sup> while the Association of Canadian Independent Travel Advisors estimated that about 200 travel agencies in Ontario have closed so far during the pandemic, with many more at risk over the coming months.<sup>34</sup>

There were positive developments aimed at supporting the hard-hit sector. Registration launched for Toronto's CafeTO program, which aims to have the temporary sidewalk patios set up in time for the long weekend in May.<sup>35</sup> As well, the Government of Ontario will provide an estimated \$100M for a new one-time Ontario Tourism and Hospitality Small Business Support Grant and \$100M for a new one-time Ontario Tourism Recovery Program as part of the 2021 Ontario Budget.<sup>36</sup>

The Ontario **trade** industry, comprising both retail and wholesale trade, observed employment losses of 41,700 (-3.9%) in Q1 2021. Lockdown restrictions across Ontario that came into effect on Boxing Day led to all non-essential businesses having to close during a significant portion of the first quarter of 2021. Essential businesses that were allowed to remain open were given stricter capacity limits,<sup>37</sup> and shopping malls were closed for in-person retail, with members of the public only permitted to access the facilities for essential services. These restrictions eased in the first quarter as the emergency stay-at-home order was lifted gradually, allowing some retailers to reopen across Ontario.

Layoff news came from a number of large retailers over the quarter. Hudson's Bay Co. announced it is permanently laying off more than 600 workers across Canada amid ongoing store closures due to COVID-19 lockdowns.<sup>38</sup> In addition, National Sports will close all of its stores, affecting eight locations in southern Ontario.<sup>39</sup> Other well-

known retailers announcing layoff news over the period included Godiva,<sup>40</sup> and American fashion retailer J. Crew.<sup>41</sup> L Brands stated that it would be closing approximately 30 and 50 stores in Canada and the US this year.<sup>42</sup> The Disney Store also plans to close at least 60 stores across North America, with the first location set to close at the Square One Shopping Centre in Mississauga.<sup>43</sup>

There were some positive developments in the Ontario trade sector, as Loblaws, Sobeys and Metro have accelerated e-commerce expansion plans that were already in the works.<sup>44</sup> All three chains have reported doubling or tripling of its e-commerce sales in 2020 compared to the previous year. In addition, Lowe's Canada is launching an extensive spring hiring campaign in preparation for the home improvement industry's busiest season. The company is hoping to hire about 3,000 full-time and part-time positions in Ontario.<sup>45</sup>

There have been significant developments in the Ontario **transportation and warehousing** industry, as employment increased by 19,400 (+5.7%) over Q1 2021, despite the various news impacting the sector. A number of announcements by the federal government in the quarter included a restriction on air service from Canada to popular sun destinations in Mexico and the Caribbean from January 30 to April 30.<sup>46</sup> The federal government also announced that as of February 22 all air travellers arriving in Canada would have to stay at a government-approved hotel for up to three days to await the results of a COVID-19 test.

In the first quarter of 2021, several airlines, including WestJet, Air Canada, and Rouge announced lay offs for approximately 4,500 workers in total.<sup>47,48,49,50,51,52</sup> In late-January, Air Transat temporarily suspended all operations until the end of April, immediately after the restrictions to Mexico and the Caribbean were announced.<sup>53</sup> While Toronto-based Sunwing cancelled all flights to Mexico and the Caribbean in line with the restrictions.<sup>54</sup> Porter Airlines stated that it plans to push back its flight restart date to May 19,<sup>55</sup> while announcing that it would permanently lay off about 20% of its Ottawa-based employees.<sup>56</sup>

Employment in the services-producing sector fell by 150,000 (-2.5%) in Q1 2021 year-over-year. The largest losses were in accommodation and food services (-94,900; -23.3%), and business, building, and other support services (-48,400; -15.0%). Five of the 11 industries within the services sector reported year-over-year employment gains, including finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing (+31,400; +5.2%) and professional, scientific and technical services (+29,700; +4.4%).

## Ontario Quarterly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally adjusted data ('000)	1st Quarter 2021	4th Quarter 2020	1st Quarter 2020	Quarterly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
<b>Total employed, all industries</b>	7,213.1	7,226.0	7,361.1	-12.8	-0.2	-148.0	-2.0
<b>Goods-producing sector</b>	1,472.1	1,472.2	1,470.1	-0.1	0.0	2.0	0.1
Agriculture	64.1	70.6	75.8	-6.5	-9.2	-11.7	-15.5
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	34.9	38.2	33.7	-3.3	-8.7	1.2	3.5
Utilities	51.3	50.9	52.9	0.4	0.7	-1.6	-3.0
Construction	537.7	527.2	560.6	10.5	2.0	-22.9	-4.1
Manufacturing	784.2	785.2	747.1	-1.0	-0.1	37.1	5.0
<b>Services-producing sector</b>	5,741.1	5,753.8	5,891.0	-12.8	-0.2	-150.0	-2.5
Trade	1,028.1	1,069.8	1,072.5	-41.7	-3.9	-44.4	-4.1
Transportation and warehousing	361.1	341.7	392.8	19.4	5.7	-31.7	-8.1
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	634.5	622.4	603.1	12.1	1.9	31.4	5.2
Professional, scientific and technical services	709.0	693.7	679.3	15.4	2.2	29.7	4.4
Business, building and other support services	274.9	281.8	323.3	-6.9	-2.4	-48.4	-15.0
Educational services	546.0	532.0	535.3	13.9	2.6	10.7	2.0
Health care and social assistance	905.7	882.3	899.4	23.4	2.7	6.3	0.7
Information, culture and recreation	289.9	289.1	291.5	0.8	0.3	-1.6	-0.5
Accommodation and food services	312.9	358.4	407.9	-45.5	-12.7	-94.9	-23.3
Other services	289.1	300.2	298.1	-11.1	-3.7	-8.9	-3.0
Public administration	389.7	382.2	387.9	7.5	2.0	1.8	0.5

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

## REGIONAL ANALYSIS

**Dominated by Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie, employment losses continue in Q1**

In efforts to lower COVID-19 transmissions, the province set out a five-tier, colour-coded restriction system with each colour corresponding to a set of public health measures designed to contain the spread of the virus. A province wide shutdown was in effect from December 26, 2020, with restrictions slowly being lifted in regions starting in February 2021.<sup>57,58</sup> Under the shutdown, shopping centres were limited to curbside pick-up or delivery, although essential businesses (such as, grocery stores, discount and big box retailers, and pharmacies) remained open at restricted capacity. Restaurants were open for takeout only while sports and recreational facilities, retail and gaming establishments were all closed. Personal care services, cinemas, and performing arts facilities were also shut to the public with some exceptions. Post-secondary educational facilities were open for virtual instruction only, with exemptions for in-person training for trades and clinical studies.

Employment fell by 109,300 (-3.1%) in the **Toronto** economic region between Q1 2020 and Q1 2021 (measured on a year-over-year, seasonally unadjusted basis), mostly in part-time employment (-80,300; -13.4%). In the same period, the regional unemployment rate grew by 3.9 percentage points to 10.1%, the highest regional unemployment rate in Ontario. As a result of rising COVID-19 case numbers, the City of Toronto cancelled all in-person, city-



run and city-approved events until July 1, 2021, including the Toronto Marathon, the Juno Awards and Luminato, although some events will proceed virtually.<sup>59</sup>

The retail industry in Toronto continued to face hardship, as major retailers closed a large numbers of stores, including all J. Crew locations,<sup>60</sup> National Sports,<sup>61</sup> Godiva,<sup>62</sup> and Kiehl's,<sup>63</sup> as well as the flagship store for Club Monaco<sup>64</sup> and Drake OVO.<sup>65</sup> Bed Bath & Beyond<sup>66</sup> and Kit and Ace<sup>67</sup> closed in Toronto, and Hudson's Bay Co. is permanently laying off department store staff.<sup>68</sup>

Widespread restaurant closures in the Toronto region continued to create significant layoffs in the accommodation and food services sector. Dozens of restaurants in the region, including Canyon Creek,<sup>69</sup> Bacon Nation,<sup>70</sup> The Green Wood,<sup>71</sup> and Smith Bros. Steakhouse,<sup>72</sup> all permanently shuttered their doors over the quarter.

In transportation, WestJet Airlines,<sup>73</sup> Air Canada<sup>74</sup> and Air Transat<sup>75</sup> have laid off pilots, flight attendants, and other aircraft support workers this quarter. GardaWorld laid off 500 screening officers at Toronto Pearson Airport due to a reduction in passenger traffic.<sup>76</sup> In manufacturing, Bombardier Inc. announced it would stop production of its Learjet later in 2021, eliminating 100 jobs in Toronto,<sup>77</sup> WeedMD permanently closed its production facility in Bowmanville<sup>78</sup> and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles temporarily shut down the Brampton Chrysler Assembly Plant due to a parts shortage.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, Bell Media laid off at least 200 workers in the Greater Toronto Area.<sup>80</sup>

Employment in the Toronto economic region did receive some positive news as Sanofi Pasteur is expanding its Toronto biopharmaceutical and vaccine facility to meet the demand for flu vaccines, creating 300 jobs.<sup>81</sup> HCL Technologies Limited, an IT services and consulting company, will create 350 jobs with a new global delivery centre in Mississauga.<sup>82</sup> Social media companies Twitter and Pinterest announced new hiring of Toronto software engineering staff,<sup>83</sup> York Metal Products will expand their facilities and create 32 manufacturing jobs in Concord,<sup>84</sup> and several restaurant expansions were announced including Triple O's,<sup>85</sup> Chick-fil-A,<sup>86</sup> and Second Cup Coffee adding new locations.<sup>87</sup> In retail, Old Navy opened a new location in Whitby,<sup>88</sup> Farm Boy opened a new location in downtown Toronto,<sup>89</sup> Lowe's is hiring 119 new staff at five of its locations in Durham<sup>90</sup> and Dollarama Inc. announced plans to open more locations over the next decade.<sup>91</sup>

The **Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie** region realized notable labour market losses in Q1 2021. Employment decreased by 47,400 (-6.1%) between Q1 2020 and Q1 2021, and the regional unemployment rate climbed to 9.5%, a 4.1 percentage point increase year-over-year. Losses were skewed towards full-time employment over part-time employment, with losses of 32,000 (-5.1%) and 15,400 (-10.4%), respectively. There were a few notable layoffs in the region. The Region of Waterloo laid off 75 employees in family support programs and childcare centres.<sup>92</sup> The Canadian Shield, a Waterloo-based personal protective equipment manufacturer, laid off 47 employees due to contract issues and automation.<sup>93</sup> In addition, Chicopee Ski and Summer Resort in Kitchener and Snow Valley Ski Resort near Barrie each laid off over 600 workers in January due to the province-wide shutdown.

Despite the decline in employment, some positive news dotted the region as well, tempering some of the decline. Molded Precision Components, a manufacturer of hand sanitizer in Oro-Medonte, is creating 35 more jobs by August.<sup>94</sup> While Lowe's and RONA are hiring 147 workers in their Barrie stores and 15 more workers at the RONA store in Midland.<sup>95</sup> Techo-Bloc Inc., a concrete manufacturer, is opening a production facility in Ayr, expecting to create 50 jobs in manufacturing and engineering.<sup>96</sup> Also, Kumi Canada will expand their plant and create 50 manufacturing jobs in Bradford.<sup>97</sup>

The **Northeast** economic region saw employment losses of 10,900 (-4.3%) in the first quarter of 2021. The unemployment rate increased in the region, climbing 2.1 percentage points from 6.1% to 8.2% year-over-year. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sault Ste. Marie Airport laid off eight equipment operators and administrative staff, slashing their staffing levels by 41%.<sup>98</sup> Also, Lafrance Furs, a Sudbury clothing manufacturer, announced it would close its doors at the end of March.<sup>99</sup> Laurentian University in Sudbury is facing insolvency and uncertainty while it waits for creditors to review restructuring plans, and was given court-approval to cut programs and lay off staff, as necessary, so long as it does not interfere with active courses.<sup>100</sup>

Although employment declined overall, the region continues to see positive developments in several industries. The Government of Canada is investing \$1.98M to build a new computer lab at Algoma University, creating 23 construction jobs and maintaining 9 full-time faculty positions and 15 part-time jobs.<sup>101</sup> Joint federal and provincial funding of over \$25M was announced to support essential air carriers that serve remote First Nation communities in Northern Ontario.<sup>102</sup> In mining, Argonaut Gold started construction on their open-pit Magino Mine and processing mill outside Dubreuilville. The project is expected to start this year and create up to 550 jobs during construction and another 350 mining jobs once the mine becomes operational in 2023.<sup>103</sup> Also, pre-construction work started on the First Cobalt Refinery south of Temiskaming Shores.<sup>104</sup>

The **Muskoka-Kawarthas** economic region led Ontario for employment growth in Q1 2021 with gains of 22,500, a 13.7% increase year-over-year. The unemployment rate fell by 1.2 percentage points to 8.6% between March 2020 and March 2021. The participation and employment rates gained 6.1 percentage points each over the same period, sitting at to 58.9% and 53.8%, respectively.

The region's employment continued to expand with the Government of Canada investing \$1.13M in Bélair Mechatronics (operating as Kawartha Controls) in Omemee, and the Government of Ontario investing \$1M in Merit Precision for hand sanitizers and disinfectant production in Peterborough.<sup>105</sup> Cannabis retailers opened in Peterborough,<sup>106</sup> Cobourg<sup>107</sup> and Bridgenorth,<sup>108</sup> and a new Domino's Pizza franchise opened in Gravenhurst.<sup>109</sup> In construction, the Government of Canada provided \$14M to help construct 46 residential units as part of an affordable rental housing project in Peterborough,<sup>110</sup> and construction on a new \$48M retirement residence began in Brighton.<sup>111</sup> The provincial government also announced a commitment of over \$6M to the riding of Peterborough-Northumberland South through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund,<sup>112</sup> as well a \$22M loan to the City of Peterborough for the maintenance and renewal of local infrastructure.<sup>113</sup>

Employment in the **London** economic region increased by 7,800 in Q1 2021, a 2.2% increase year-over-year. However, the unemployment rate rose by 1.8 percentage points between March 2020 and March 2021. The region's labour market continued to see significant manufacturing investment and expansion in the first quarter of 2021. General Motors Canada invested \$1B at their Ingersoll CAMI Assembly plant for electric vehicle production,<sup>114</sup> Next Generation Manufacturing Canada invested \$16.8M into an insect protein production facility in London,<sup>115</sup> and the Government of Ontario invested \$2M into CEM Specialties Inc. in London to produce airborne COVID-19 detector devices.<sup>116</sup> In addition, Systemair, a ventilation company in Tillsonburg,<sup>117</sup> and Bos Innovations, an automation and robotics systems manufacturer in London,<sup>118</sup> are expanding their production facilities.

In construction, Medallion Developments started building two residential towers<sup>119</sup> and Ayerswood Development Corporation began another high-rise condominium project in London.<sup>120</sup> The Government of Canada announced an investment of \$40.1M to fix and revitalize 2,082 units in London and Middlesex Community Housing (LMCH).<sup>121</sup>

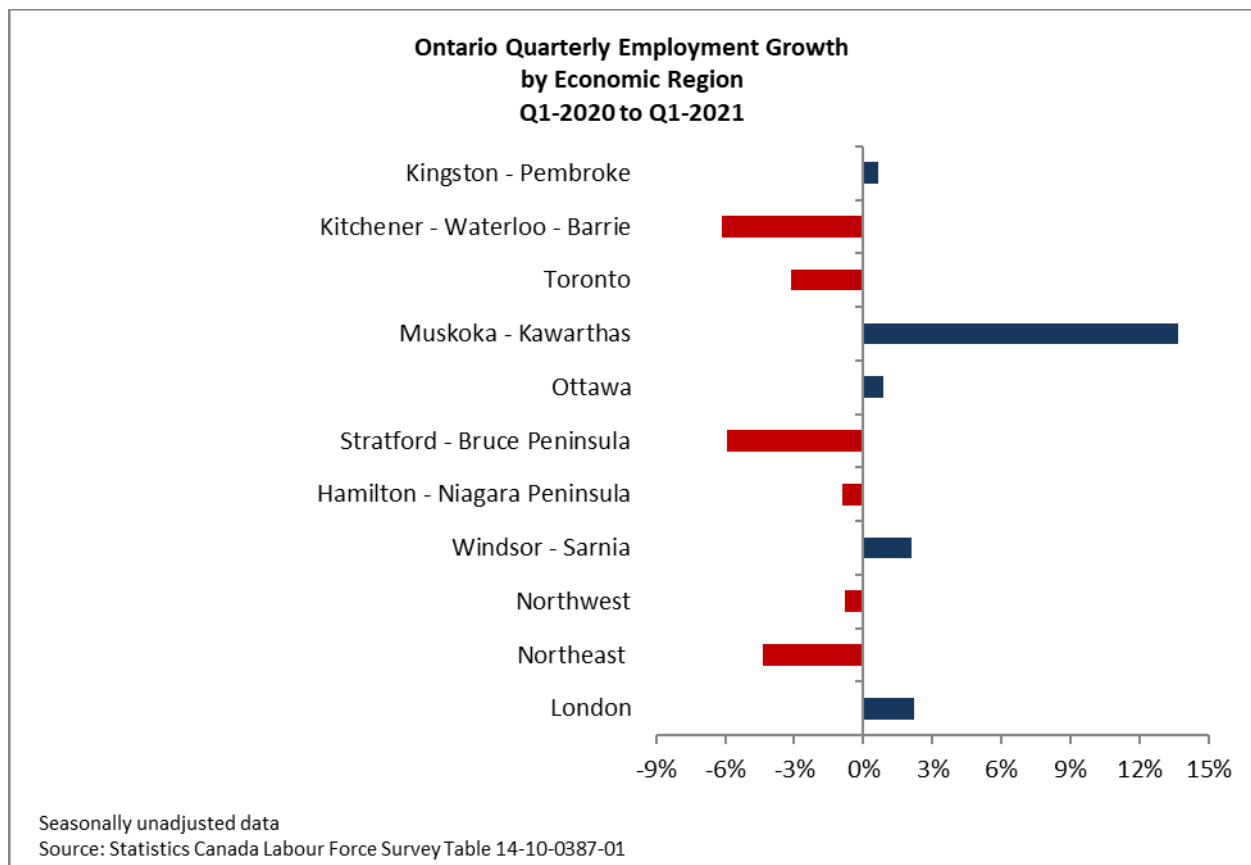
A combined investment of \$8.1M was announced to improved sport, recreation and cultural facilities in London from federal, provincial, and municipal governments.<sup>122</sup> Construction also began on the \$35M Terrace Lodge re-development project in Elgin County.<sup>123</sup>

**Ontario Quarterly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region**

Seasonally unadjusted data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	1st Quarter 2021 ('000)	1st Quarter 2020 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	1st Quarter 2021 (%)	1st Quarter 2020 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
<b>Ontario</b>	7,105.6	7,246.6	-1.9	9.1	6.2	2.9
<b>Economic Regions</b>						
Ottawa	728.7	722.2	0.9	6.3	5.0	1.3
Kingston - Pembroke	209.2	207.9	0.6	9.4	7.2	2.2
Muskoka - Kawarthas	187.2	164.7	13.7	8.6	9.8	-1.2
Toronto	3,390.9	3,500.2	-3.1	10.1	6.2	3.9
Kitchener - Waterloo - Barrie	725.2	772.6	-6.1	9.5	5.4	4.1
Hamilton - Niagara Peninsula	725.1	731.9	-0.9	8.5	6.7	1.8
London	359.5	351.7	2.2	7.4	5.6	1.8
Windsor - Sarnia	289.2	283.3	2.1	9.0	9.5	-0.5
Stratford - Bruce Peninsula	153.7	163.4	-5.9	6.6	5.9	0.7
Northeast	240.5	251.4	-4.3	8.2	6.1	2.1
Northwest	96.4	97.2	-0.8	7.6	6.7	0.9

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0387-01



**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](http://www.statcan.gc.ca)

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