



Labour Market Bulletin

Saskatchewan

December 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 continued its slow economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic during the fourth quarter of 2021 (October to December), as employment edged up for the third consecutive quarter. Total employment was up 0.6% (+3,300) compared to Q3-2021, with gains in full-time employment (+6,800) more than off-setting losses in part-time work (-3,500).

On an annual basis, employment was up 13,300 workers (+2.4%) in Q4-2021. However, compared with pre-pandemic February 2020, employment remained down by 8,600 jobs (-1.5%). In fact, Saskatchewan is one of only three provinces yet to reach its pre-pandemic employment level, and trails all provinces on both an absolute and percentage basis. Nationally, employment is 0.8% above February 2020.

Private sector employment slipped in Q4-2021, and is now 5,400 (-1.6%) below February 2020. By contrast, public sector employment now sits 6,700 (+4.6%) above its February 2020 pre-pandemic level.¹

Self-employment continues to lag, down 2,900 jobs (-3.2%) from Q4-2020, and 9,900 jobs (-10.1%) from February 2020. 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

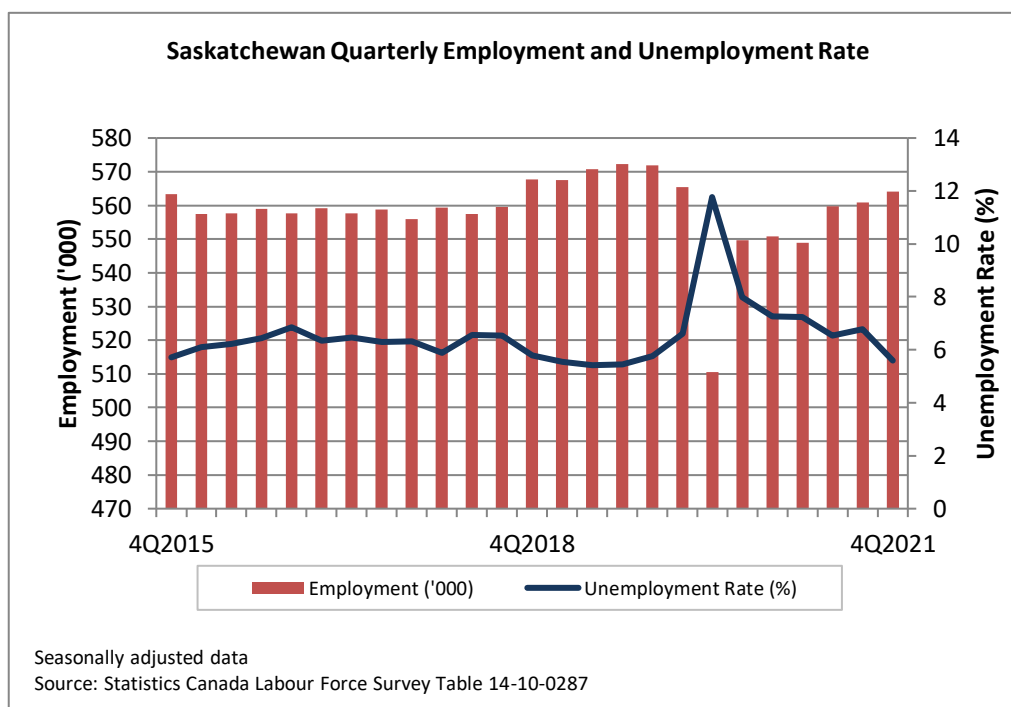
Seasonally adjusted data	4th Quarter 2021	3rd Quarter 2021	4th Quarter 2020	Quarterly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	890.3	889.7	888.0	0.6	0.1	2.3	0.3
Labour Force ('000)	597.6	601.6	593.9	-4.0	-0.7	3.7	0.6
Employment ('000)	564.1	560.8	550.8	3.3	0.6	13.3	2.4
Full-Time ('000)	461.2	454.4	449.9	6.8	1.5	11.3	2.5
Part-Time ('000)	102.9	106.4	100.9	-3.5	-3.3	2.0	2.0
Unemployment ('000)	33.5	40.8	43.1	-7.3	-17.9	-9.6	-22.3
Unemployment Rate (%)	5.6	6.8	7.3	-1.2	-	-1.7	-
Participation Rate (%)	67.1	67.6	66.9	-0.5	-	0.2	-
Employment Rate (%)	63.4	63.0	62.0	0.4	-	1.4	-

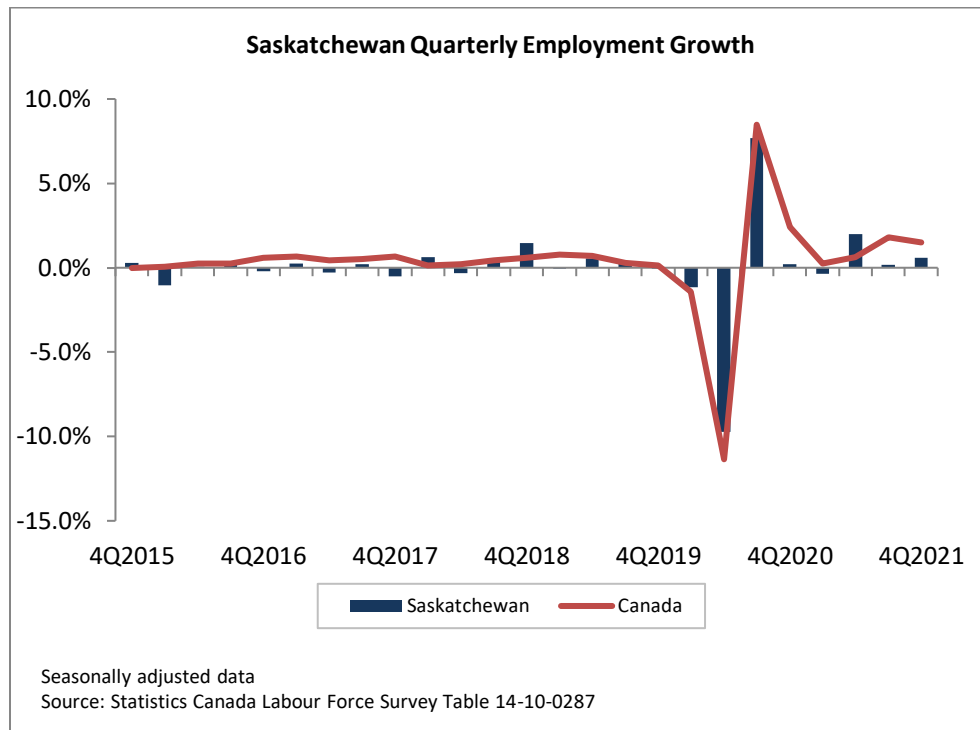
Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

COVID-19 vaccination rates increased during Q4-2021, but still remain the lowest among provinces. As of January 1, 2022, 71.96% of Saskatchewan's population was fully vaccinated, compared to 76.83% nationwide.³ With low vaccination rates, the earlier lifting of public health measures in July proved premature and active cases soared. Public health measures introduced in mid-September effective to January 31, 2022, finally turned the tide in November during the Delta variant wave. By the end of that month, Saskatchewan was below the national average of 70. As elsewhere, active cases have skyrocketed with the onset of the Omicron variant. Nonetheless, as of January 6, 2022, the known rate of cases in Saskatchewan (444 per 100,000) was the lowest in the country.⁴ It should be noted that the December 2021 Labour Force Survey sampling was completed before the Omicron variant took hold in the country and thus under-report the variant's labour market impacts.

In Q4-2021, Saskatchewan's unemployment rate decreased sharply to 5.6%, third lowest among provinces and well below the national rate of 6.2%. However, over half the improvement was due to people exiting the labour force, which declined by 4,000 (-0.7%) on the quarter.





Unemployment by Major Demographic Group

Saskatchewan Quarterly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally adjusted data	4th Quarter 2021 (%)	3rd Quarter 2021 (%)	4th Quarter 2020 (%)	Quarterly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	5.6	6.8	7.3	-1.2	-1.7
25 years and over	4.8	6.2	5.9	-1.4	-1.1
Men - 25 years and over	5.3	7.3	6.8	-2.0	-1.5
Women - 25 years and over	4.2	4.9	4.8	-0.7	-0.6
15 to 24 years	10.1	10.1	15.2	0.0	-5.1
Men - 15 to 24 years	10.9	11.0	19.2	-0.1	-8.3
Women - 15 to 24 years	9.2	9.0	10.9	0.2	-1.7

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 Q4-2020 when their unemployment rate was 19.2%, almost double that of young women at that time. Since then, as Saskatchewan’s economy has improved from its pandemic lows, the unemployment rates of the major demographic groups have returned to more historically normal levels. In fact, the Q4-2021 male youth unemployment rate (10.9%) is lower than annual averages dating back to 2016.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

On the quarter, employment in Saskatchewan's goods-producing sector decreased by 5,300 (-4.1%), while employment in the services-producing sector increased by 8,600 (+2.0%). Employment in the goods-producing sector is far below pre-pandemic levels, down (-12.8%) from February 2020. By contrast, employment in the services-producing sector represents an overall increase of 2.2% compared to pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, staff shortages persist in such services-producing industries as **accommodation and food services** and **healthcare and social assistance**, as many workers in these industries opt for new careers due to wage constraints, irregular hours, or burnout.

Saskatchewan Quarterly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally adjusted data ('000)	4th Quarter 2021	3rd Quarter 2021	4th Quarter 2020	Quarterly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	564.1	560.8	550.8	3.3	0.6	13.3	2.4
Goods-producing sector	124.3	129.6	131.2	-5.3	-4.1	-6.9	-5.3
Agriculture	24.1	28.5	33.6	-4.4	-15.4	-9.5	-28.3
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	18.2	19.1	20.6	-0.9	-4.7	-2.4	-11.7
Utilities	6.3	6.6	6.3	-0.3	-4.5	0.0	0.0
Construction	43.4	42.5	39.6	0.9	2.1	3.8	9.6
Manufacturing	32.3	33.0	31.1	-0.7	-2.1	1.2	3.9
Services-producing sector	439.8	431.2	419.7	8.6	2.0	20.1	4.8
Trade	96.2	94.3	87.2	1.9	2.0	9.0	10.3
Transportation and warehousing	25.7	23.1	24.6	2.6	11.3	1.1	4.5
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	31.4	28.6	27.0	2.8	9.8	4.4	16.3
Professional, scientific and technical services	27.3	27.5	27.7	-0.2	-0.7	-0.4	-1.4
Business, building and other support services	14.8	15.4	16.3	-0.6	-3.9	-1.5	-9.2
Educational services	46.1	46.0	43.4	0.1	0.2	2.7	6.2
Health care and social assistance	89.6	86.5	82.2	3.1	3.6	7.4	9.0
Information, culture and recreation	17.3	19.3	13.8	-2.0	-10.4	3.5	25.4
Accommodation and food services	31.8	29.8	31.2	2.0	6.7	0.6	1.9
Other services	24.9	25.5	31.3	-0.6	-2.4	-6.4	-20.4
Public administration	34.6	35.2	35.0	-0.6	-1.7	-0.4	-1.1

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** (-9,500 or -28.3%). In 2021, prolonged drought conditions caused harvest to begin early and progress quickly as many farmers tried to preserve yields.⁵ Despite the efforts, wheat production was down 48% compared to 2020, while canola production was down 45%.⁶ Looking ahead, governments are maintaining focus on the human resource needs of the industry. The federal and provincial governments will provide \$100,000 to the Next Gen Agriculture Mentorship Program. Applications to the program are now being accepted and the successful candidates will develop leadership skills in the agriculture sector.⁷

Employment in the **construction** industry increased on the quarter (+900), while also showing good growth year-over-year (+3,800). 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, is investing a further \$7.5 billion into the Jansen potash mine east of Saskatoon. Around 1,000 construction jobs will be created during 2022 with 3,500 occurring during the peak construction period of 2024.⁸ In another major development, Federated Co-operatives Limited is looking to purchase land in Regina's north end to build a renewable diesel plant. The proposed development could cost up to \$2 billion, and create about 1,500 construction jobs and more than 150 permanent jobs.⁹ In November, the most recent data available, housing starts in the province were up 8% year-to-date compared to 2020.¹⁰ Residential construction is being driven by a combination of higher than average household savings and lower than average mortgage rates, both as a result of the pandemic.

Saskatchewan's resource extraction industry (**forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas**) lost 900 jobs on the quarter, down 2,400 year-over-year, primarily in mining. Mining jobs are expected to return as potash demand increases. Indeed, once operational, BHP expects to add 400 jobs at its Jansen potash mine and 200 at its Saskatoon Discovery Plaza office as of 2027. The company aims at having its operational workforce be gender-balanced and 20% Indigenous.¹¹

Saskatchewan is the second-largest producer of oil and gas by volume in the country. With oil prices at seven-year highs, production has started to rise. In October 2021, the most recent data available, oil production in Saskatchewan increased by 5.4% compared to October 2020.¹² According to PetrolMI, an industry labour market information provider, in September 2021, the unemployment rate among oil and gas services workers in Saskatchewan was essentially zero.¹³ Meanwhile, the Government of Saskatchewan is providing an additional \$55 million in funding to eligible companies during the final phase of the Accelerated Site Closure Program. To date, over 5,500 well site reclamation and remediation projects have been completed.¹⁴

In the services-producing sector, Saskatchewan's **retail and wholesale trade** industry added 1,900 jobs (+2.0%) on the quarter; employment in the industry is far beyond its pre-pandemic level (+13.6%). Hiring surged over the past year as vaccination rates rose, COVID-19 public health restrictions eased, and outlets resumed full in-store operations. New retail businesses are also adding to employment numbers. With the announcement of BHP's Jansen project, the Quill Centre in Humboldt is looking to expand and add more storefronts. The centre is in talks with one retailer to add a store by winter 2022, with room to add two more.¹⁵ In addition, Pioneer Co-op is opening a second liquor store location in Swift Current. It is expected to create 10 new jobs once construction finishes in May 2022.¹⁶

Employment in the **health care and social assistance** industry increased on the quarter (+3,100), while showing notable growth on a year-over-year basis (+7,400). Despite the job gains, Saskatchewan's healthcare system continued to struggle during the pandemic. Early in Q4-2021, the health care industry grappled with the fourth wave of the pandemic, straining already under-staffed health care facilities in the province. Because of overflowing ICUs, at least 27 patients were transferred to hospitals in Ontario.¹⁷ However, the situation improved greatly and the Saskatchewan Health Authority began redeploying 450 staff members working in contact tracing, testing assessment, and outbreak management back to their home departments.¹⁸ With the onset of the Omicron variant in late December, cases jumped markedly, though to a lesser extent than in other provinces.

Looking back on the year, in the first nine months of 2021, 10.5% more employees left the Saskatchewan Health Authority compared to the same period in 2020. To address the staffing shortage, there will be 53 extra critical care nurse openings.¹⁹

While employment in Saskatchewan's **professional, scientific and technical services** industry was little changed on the quarter (-200), several recent developments are likely to support future job growth. Innovation Saskatchewan is granting \$350,000 to Barnstorm Agtech Inc. to support the research and development of a mid-sized, hybrid-electric autonomous, swarming farm tractor. The agricultural robotic company, located in Senlac, near Lloydminster, hopes to directly address the chronic labour shortages of prairie agriculture.²⁰ In addition, the Government of Canada is providing over \$700,000 to Cowessess First Nation for its Gravesite Reclamation Project. The three-year project will include research, archival work, and electronic mapping of marked and unmarked graves.²¹ Finally, the University of Saskatchewan's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) is being recognized for its work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations has awarded VIDO \$6 million, with a further \$230,000 coming from three of Saskatoon's hospital foundations.^{22, 23}

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

On a year-over-year basis, employment was up in four of five economic regions compared to Q4-2020, as the province recovered from a fourth wave of COVID-19 cases and COVID-19 related hospitalizations. Only **Swift Current – Moose Jaw** saw job losses on the year of -1,200 (-2.3%), due to weakness across the services-producing sector. Saskatoon - Biggar led the regions by adding 7,300 jobs (+3.7%) overall. The **Yorkton - Melville** region had the lowest unemployment rate in the province, down 1.4 percentage points, to 4.4%.

Saskatchewan Quarterly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

Seasonally unadjusted data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	4th Quarter 2021 ('000)	4th Quarter 2020 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	4th Quarter 2021 (%)	4th Quarter 2020 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Saskatchewan	563.7	551.8	2.2	4.9	6.6	-1.7
Economic Regions						
Regina - Moose Mountain	177.7	173.8	2.2	4.6	6.1	-1.5
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	50.6	51.8	-2.3	6.3	6.7	-0.4
Saskatoon - Biggar	203.3	196.0	3.7	5.0	7.2	-2.2
Yorkton - Melville	34.4	34.3	0.3	4.4	5.8	-1.4
Prince Albert and Northern	97.7	95.9	1.9	5.1	6.4	-1.3

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

Year-over-year, the **Saskatoon - Biggar** region's unemployment rate dropped 2.2 percentage points to 5.0, the largest improvement among regions. One key contributor was an increase of 9,600 jobs (+6.2%) in the services-producing sector. In a rare development during pandemic times, The Vault restaurant opened a second location in Saskatoon.²⁴ Addressing homelessness, an emergency downtown overnight shelter recently opened in Saskatoon. The shelter will provide a warm place to stay for up to 50 people experiencing homelessness, as well

as offer mental health, addictions and elders services.²⁵ The City of Saskatoon will also spend \$7.5M, through the federal government's Rapid Housing Initiative, to build 32 new units to support Indigenous people at greater risk of homelessness or living in temporary shelters because of the pandemic.²⁶ Other construction in the region includes a new \$30M gas-to-power facility will be built near Coleville, a small community north of Kindersley. The Kopahawakenum Flare to Power Facility is expected to open in 2023, create 50 jobs during construction and 20 jobs once in operation.²⁷

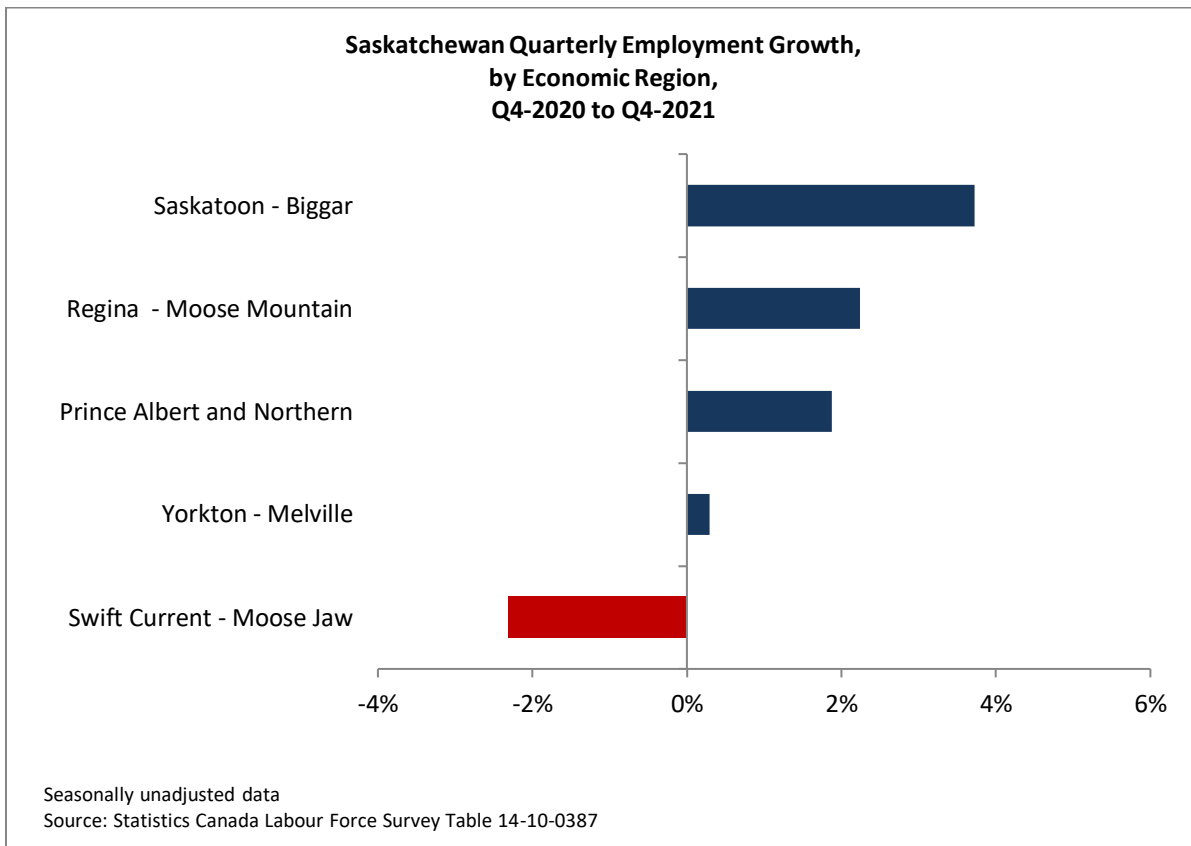
Compared to the previous year, employment in **Regina - Moose Mountain** grew 3,900 (+2.2%), while the unemployment rate dropped 1.5 percentage points to 4.6%. Strong employment gains of 6,500 (4.7%) in the services-producing industries contributed to the region's growth. Samsung Electronics Canada will open a new regional office in downtown Regina. The new office will support the deployment of 5G network capabilities across the province and will create a minimum of 10 jobs.²⁸ Meanwhile, Federated Co-operatives Limited, has agreed to purchase 181 Husky retail fuel sites totalling \$264M. The acquisitions will help increase the use and capacity of the Co-op Refinery Complex in Regina and the Co-op Ethanol Complex near Belle Plaine.²⁹

Graham Construction has been selected to manage work at the new Urgent Care Centre in Regina. The centre will provide patient care to individuals who require immediate attention, with construction expected to begin in spring 2022.³⁰ In Estevan, renovations on the Early Years Family Resource Centre are scheduled to be done by the end of January. The centre will hire more people to increase the programs offered and expand the hours of operation.³¹

Compared to Q4-2020, 1,800 (+1.9%) more people were employed in the **Prince Albert and Northern** region, the only region in Saskatchewan to experience gains in both the goods-producing sector (+2.0%) and services-producing sector (1.8%). Meanwhile, the region's unemployment rate fell 1.3 percentage point to 5.1%.

The provincial government is looking to the forest industry to support economic development in northern Saskatchewan and is spending \$1M to help stop the spread of mountain pine beetles.³² At the same time, One Sky Forest Products' will be co-locating its new oriented strand board plant on Paper Excellence's Prince Albert pulp mill site. The two firms have also signed a new agreement to share log storage areas and existing infrastructure.³³

The Government of Saskatchewan is providing \$2M in funding to support training and employment services in northern Saskatchewan. Northern Career Quest Inc. will facilitate the programs and services, helping approximately 400 Indigenous job seekers.³⁴ The government is also providing \$337,000 to Muskwa Lake Wellness Camp, located near Pinehouse, northwest of La Ronge. The camp provides traditional Indigenous teachings and western addictions education to assist with alcoholism, suicide rates and overdose deaths.³⁵



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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