



Labour Market Bulletin

Saskatchewan

March 2022



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 continued to make progress in the first quarter of 2022, now two years into the COVID-19 pandemic. Employment climbed for the fourth consecutive quarter, increasing by 2.5% from Q4-2021 and with gains in both full-time and part-time employment (+2.1% and +4.3%, respectively).

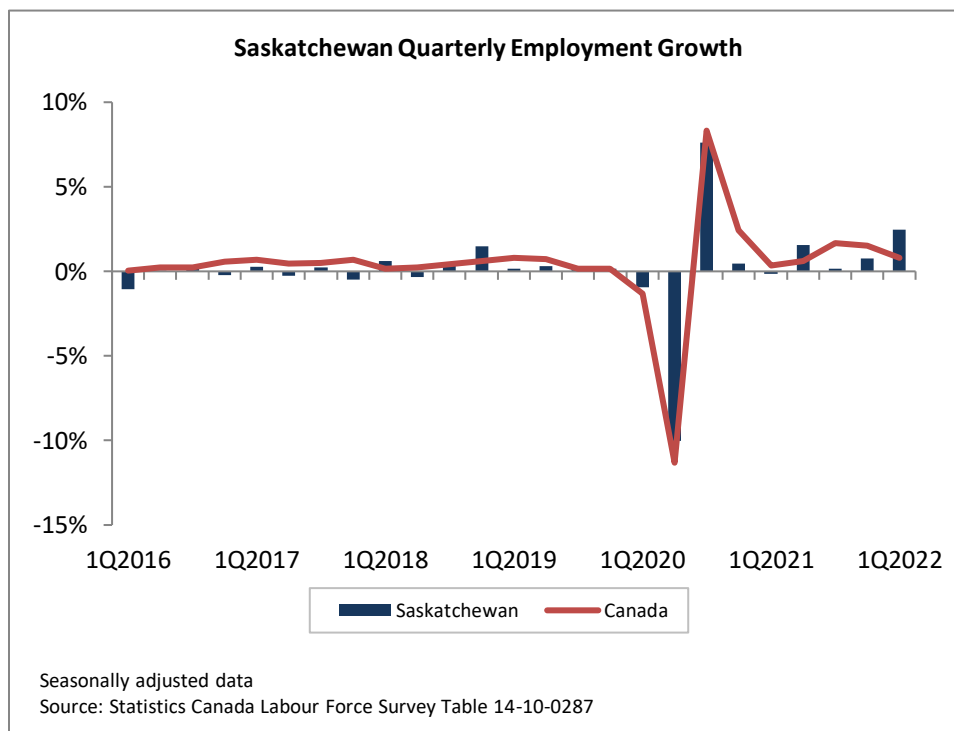
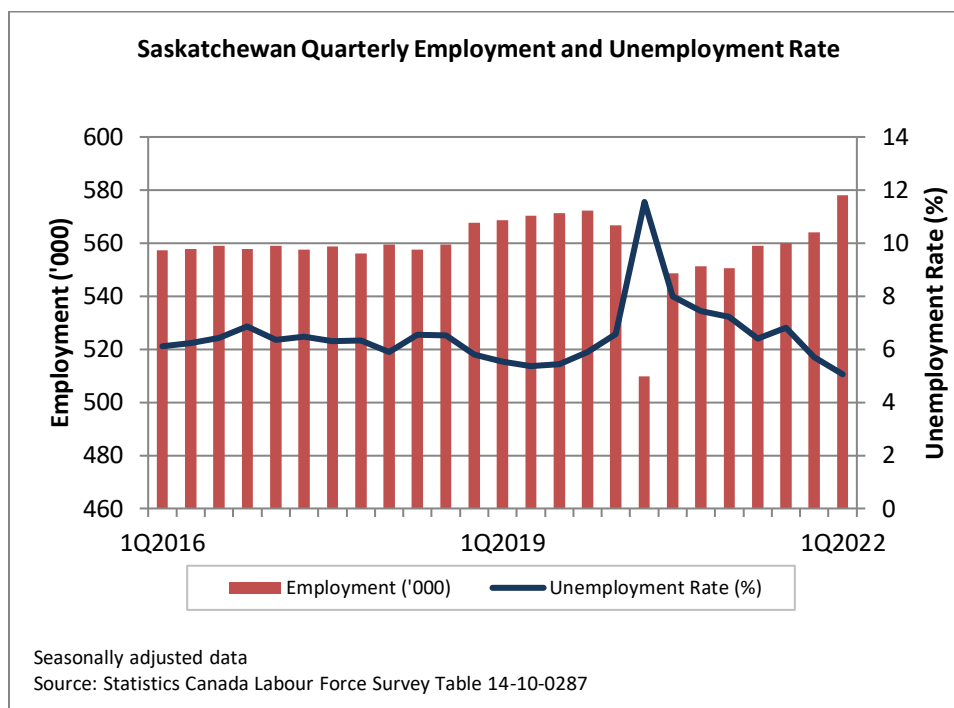
When compared with Q1 of the previous year, employment rose 5.0%. When compared with February 2020 – the last month before COVID-19 was first detected in Saskatchewan – the province has added 3,900 jobs (+0.7%). While population growth over the same period should also be factored in (+4,100), it does appear that Saskatchewan is finding its way through some of the labour market difficulties posed by the pandemic.

Saskatchewan Quarterly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally adjusted data	1st Quarter 2022	4th Quarter 2021	1st Quarter 2021	Quarterly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	893.0	890.3	888.9	2.7	0.3	4.1	0.5
Labour Force ('000)	608.9	598.2	593.3	10.7	1.8	15.6	2.6
Employment ('000)	578.0	564.1	550.5	13.9	2.5	27.5	5.0
Full-Time ('000)	470.4	460.9	449.2	9.5	2.1	21.2	4.7
Part-Time ('000)	107.6	103.2	101.3	4.4	4.3	6.3	6.2
Unemployment ('000)	30.8	34.1	42.8	-3.3	-9.7	-12.0	-28.0
Unemployment Rate (%)	5.1	5.7	7.2	-0.6	-	-2.1	-
Participation Rate (%)	68.2	67.2	66.7	1.0	-	1.5	-
Employment Rate (%)	64.7	63.4	61.9	1.3	-	2.8	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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



Quarterly employment gains included increases in both the public and private sectors (+1.7% and +3.2%). The numbers have even improved slightly in self-employment (+0.7%), a category that includes small business owners and in which progress has been slow over the past two years.¹

When looking at employment on a monthly basis, however, the province did lose some ground. There were 4,500 fewer jobs in March than in February, including 1,600 fewer full-time jobs.

Saskatchewan's unemployment rate also ticked up on the month, from 4.7% in February to 5.0% in March. Despite the increase, it was still below the national average of 5.3%, and the second lowest among provinces.

The quarterly unemployment rate in Saskatchewan sat at 5.1% in Q1-2022. Taking a long view, the rate has improved significantly, down -0.6 percentage points from the previous quarter and -2.1 percentage points year-over-year. In Q2 of 2020, the early months of the pandemic, the jobless rate reached 11.2%.

Saskatchewan Quarterly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally adjusted data	1st Quarter 2022 (%)	4th Quarter 2021 (%)	1st Quarter 2021 (%)	Quarterly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	5.1	5.7	7.2	-0.6	-2.1
25 years and over	4.6	4.9	6.0	-0.3	-1.4
Men - 25 years and over	4.9	5.4	6.4	-0.5	-1.5
Women - 25 years and over	4.2	4.3	5.6	-0.1	-1.4
15 to 24 years	7.8	10.4	14.3	-2.6	-6.5
Men - 15 to 24 years	7.9	11.1	17.8	-3.2	-9.9
Women - 15 to 24 years	7.9	9.6	10.7	-1.7	-2.8

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

Young people in Saskatchewan typically have more difficulty finding employment than the rest of the work force. Workers between the ages of 15 and 24 have historically posted unemployment rates up to double that of their older counterparts. During the COVID-19 pandemic this disparity became even greater, with the unemployment rate for younger workers reaching 26.7% in May 2020, more than 2.5 times that of workers 25 and up. Now two years into the pandemic and with the easing of public health measures, the youth unemployment rate was 7.8% in Q1-2022, down -2.6 percentage points from the previous quarter and -6.5 year-over-year. Young men in particular are faring better; the unemployment rate for this group was over 7 percentage points higher than their female counterparts at this time last year, but the two were exactly even in Q1-2022.

Saskatchewan was the first jurisdiction in Canada to remove all COVID-19 measures, beginning in January with the relaxation of self-isolation requirements and scaling back of PCR testing, contact tracing, and data reporting. The province's mask mandate and vaccine passport program were eliminated in February, and in March the Government of Saskatchewan ended the provincial State of Emergency.^{2,3}

The pandemic does continue to have an impact despite the lack of provincial measures. In March 2022, Saskatchewan's COVID-19 mortality rate was the highest in the country.⁴ Hospitalizations rose again at the end of the month following an earlier decline, and wastewater testing suggested increasing spread and a possible second peak to the Omicron wave.^{5,6} In an effort to boost lagging vaccination uptake, the Province is running a four-week public awareness campaign to encourage third doses.⁷

Two years into the pandemic, many small businesses are still contending with low sales, high debt loads, and the possibility of permanent closure.⁸ The rising costs of fuel, insurance, food, and wages all pose challenges, along with supply chain issues and labour shortages.⁹

The provincial government has announced a number of initiatives with the goal of spurring on the local economy. These include work placement programs for underemployed jobseekers and newcomers to the province, self-employment training for residents with disabilities, and digital literacy training geared toward helping people look for work.^{10,11,12,13} The SaskMétis Economic Development Corporation has also developed a number of pandemic relief programs to assist Métis entrepreneurs, and has built a directory of verified Métis businesses.¹⁴

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

On the quarter, employment in Saskatchewan's **goods-producing sector** increased by 5,000 (+4.0%), but was still down 3,100 (-2.3%) year-over-year. The sector also remained well below pre-pandemic levels, down -8.9% from February 2020. The **services-producing sector** fared better, gaining 9,000 jobs (+2.0%) since last quarter, and 30,700 (+7.3%) year-over-year. Employment was also up when compared with February 2020 (+3.8%), but the sector continues to face labour shortages, employee burnout, and high staff turnover.

Saskatchewan Quarterly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally adjusted data ('000)	1st Quarter 2022	4th Quarter 2021	1st Quarter 2021	Quarterly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	578.0	564.1	550.5	13.9	2.5	27.5	5.0
Goods-producing sector	129.6	124.6	132.7	5.0	4.0	-3.1	-2.3
Agriculture	25.3	24.2	32.1	1.1	4.5	-6.8	-21.2
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	18.9	17.9	21.1	1.0	5.6	-2.2	-10.4
Utilities	6.0	6.4	5.8	-0.4	-6.3	0.2	3.4
Construction	47.9	43.9	43.4	4.0	9.1	4.5	10.4
Manufacturing	31.5	32.2	30.3	-0.7	-2.2	1.2	4.0
Services-producing sector	448.5	439.5	417.8	9.0	2.0	30.7	7.3
Trade	98.6	96.4	88.8	2.2	2.3	9.8	11.0
Transportation and warehousing	25.6	25.8	23.5	-0.2	-0.8	2.1	8.9
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	31.4	31.2	26.1	0.2	0.6	5.3	20.3
Professional, scientific and technical services	27.8	27.1	28.2	0.7	2.6	-0.4	-1.4
Business, building and other support services	16.9	15.0	16.2	1.9	12.7	0.7	4.3
Educational services	49.0	46.8	44.1	2.2	4.7	4.9	11.1
Health care and social assistance	87.6	89.7	84.1	-2.1	-2.3	3.5	4.2
Information, culture and recreation	18.5	17.2	13.6	1.3	7.6	4.9	36.0
Accommodation and food services	32.0	31.2	29.3	0.8	2.6	2.7	9.2
Other services	26.1	24.7	28.7	1.4	5.7	-2.6	-9.1
Public administration	34.8	34.4	35.3	0.4	1.2	-0.5	-1.4

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, employment in the **agriculture** industry was up from last quarter (+4.5%), but down significantly year-over-year (-21.2%). Drought and extreme temperatures resulted in below-average yields for the 2021 harvest season and overall production fell nearly 47% from the previous year.¹⁵ Heavy

snowfall this winter has improved the drought forecast for parts of Saskatchewan, but the outlook remains uneven with the central and southwestern regions of the province still at risk.¹⁶ Wheat prices rose this quarter, climbing 50-60% in part due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.¹⁷ Production costs are also creeping up, however, with farmers paying more for fertilizer and other inputs.¹⁸ Additionally, the federal carbon price increased on April 1, adding to grain drying and transport costs.¹⁹

Employment in Saskatchewan's resource extraction industry (**forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas**) grew by 5.6% on the quarter but fell by -10.4% year-over-year. Most losses have been in mining, but the outlook may be improving. Cameco announced plans to restart one of its Northern Saskatchewan uranium operations, which dropped 550 jobs when it shut down production in 2018 amid a slump in the global market. The company plans to nearly double its workforce at McArthur River/Key Lake to 900 by 2025.²⁰ Saskatoon-based potash giant Nutrien is ramping up production in response to supply uncertainty caused by the war in Ukraine. The company will hire more employees at its Saskatchewan mines as it increases output by one million tonnes to approximately 15 million tonnes this year. Nutrien expects to account for 70% of global potash production by the end of 2022.²¹

As prices rise for both potash and oil, non-renewable resource revenue in Saskatchewan will grow by \$1.6 billion to \$2.9 billion in 2022-2023, according to the province's finance minister.²² The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers is forecasting a 16% increase in oil and gas investment in the province in 2022.²³

Meanwhile, the forestry industry hit an all-time high for product sales in 2021.²⁴ The provincial government aims to double its growth by 2030, and is spending \$400,000 each year over the next five years to create a commercial forest inventory map displaying available timber within the province.²⁵ The industry is an important economic driver in the province's North.

Saskatchewan's **construction** industry added 4,000 jobs this quarter (+9.1%), and showed progress on an annual basis as well (+10.4%). BuildForce Canada predicts continued growth over the next two years, led by increased residential construction as well as a number of large projects. Work on the Federated Co-operatives Limited canola crush plant and diesel refinery in Regina will create 2,750 positions,²⁶ while BHP's \$7.5 billion investment in the Jansen potash mine east of Saskatoon is expected to generate 3,500 temporary construction jobs between now and 2027.²⁷ The ongoing construction of SaskPower's Great Plains Power Station in Moose Jaw is also a contributor, employing up to 350 workers.²⁸ Recruiting challenges may present a problem for the industry with 13% of the work force set to retire over the next six years, requiring 6,100 new workers to meet continued demand.²⁹

Turning to the services-producing sector, employment in **professional and scientific services** was up from the previous quarter (+2.6%) but declined year-over-year (-1.4%). Overall this is an expanding industry in Saskatchewan. It has grown by 38% since 2010 and is currently experiencing a shortage of skilled workers.³⁰ To address this, the provincial government has created a new pathway under the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee program specifically to recruit tech professionals.³¹

In **educational services**, employment increased this quarter (+4.7%) as well as year-over-year (+11.1%), which may have been partly due to the increased need for substitute teachers during the pandemic.³² The recently-released provincial budget includes \$7 million to help school divisions hire up to 200 new full-time educational

assistants in 2022-2023.³³ Despite an increase in provincial education spending this year, the Chinook School Division anticipates a funding shortfall. The division, which includes schools in Swift Current and Maple Creek, announced it will cut 20 teaching positions in the fall and reduce hours for educational assistants.³⁴ Saskatoon's public and Catholic school divisions similarly expect insufficient funds to cover staffing costs as well as other rising operating expenses.³⁵

In post-secondary education, the provincial government has launched two programs aimed at attracting more international students to Saskatchewan. One initiative trains specialized staff at the province's post-secondary schools to recruit and support new students, and the other hires student ambassadors to promote Saskatchewan as a place to study.^{36,37}

Employment in the **health care and social assistance** industry dropped on the quarter (-2.3%), but was up on an annual basis (+4.2%). After more than two years of COVID-19, the longstanding labour shortages in Saskatchewan's health care system have worsened. In a recent survey of nurses, over 80% reported their workplaces were understaffed, and nearly 60% have considered leaving the profession within the past year.³⁸ A number of efforts are ongoing to address the issue. In its recent budget, the provincial government announced it will create an independent agency to recruit and retain health care workers. It is allotting just under \$5 million to add 250 new nurse training seats, as well as \$2.5 million to bring 150 health care workers from the Philippines to Saskatchewan. Another \$3.5 million was set aside for the recruitment of physicians, particularly in rural areas of the province.^{39,40}

Saskatchewan's surgical waitlist has grown rapidly during the pandemic and over 35,000 people currently await treatment. The Government of Canada is providing \$62 million to the Saskatchewan Health Authority to help resolve the backlog, and the provincial government earmarked \$21.6 million in its 2022-2023 budget. The target is to increase surgeries by 7,000 in the next year.⁴¹

Childcare services are also part of the health care and social assistance industry, and should see significant employment growth in the coming months and years. Saskatchewan signed on last year to the federal government's national early learning and childcare strategy, which aims to provide childcare for an average of \$10 per day by 2025-2026.⁴² In February, Saskatchewan was the first province to reach an initial goal of reducing fees by 50%, and the following month the province added over 1,200 new childcare spaces in 21 communities, working toward a target of 28,000 by 2026.^{43,44} This includes 180 new spaces in Lloydminster, along with 40 new jobs created for early childhood educators (ECEs).⁴⁵ Growing the pool of qualified ECEs will be critical to the plan in Saskatchewan. The Province has developed partnerships with postsecondary institutions to accelerate ECE certification, and is currently offering a one-time grant to childcare centres to train and recruit staff.^{46,47}

The **Information, Arts and Culture** industry added 1,300 jobs (+7.6) in Q1-2022, and showed the most improvement of all industries year-over-year (+36.0%), as the easing of public health measures allowed for the return of public gatherings.

With its 2022-2023 budget, the Government of Saskatchewan announced it would be applying provincial sales tax to tickets and memberships for fitness centres and entertainment venues. Representatives from the industry, already hard-hit by closures and capacity limits throughout the pandemic, are concerned that price increases will deter customers from returning.⁴⁸

The Government of Saskatchewan is increasing its grant program for film and television production by \$8 million as a means to attract more projects to the province. Now at \$10 million, it is a substantial improvement from previous funding, but filmmakers point out that the elimination of the film employment tax credit in 2010 means there is a lot of ground to make up to rebuild the industry.⁴⁹

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

On an annual basis, employment was up in three of five economic regions compared to Q1-2021. Yearly job losses of -2,600 (-5.0%) and -300 (-0.8%) occurred in **Swift Current – Moose Jaw** and **Yorkton – Melville** respectively. **Saskatoon – Biggar** led the regions in employment growth, adding 18,500 jobs, and also reported the lowest unemployment rate in the province, at 4.8%.

Saskatchewan Quarterly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

Seasonally unadjusted data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	1st Quarter 2022 ('000)	1st Quarter 2021 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	1st Quarter 2022 (%)	1st Quarter 2021 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Saskatchewan	567.1	539.7	5.1	5.4	7.8	-2.4
Economic Regions						
Regina - Moose Mountain	179.2	167.5	7.0	5.0	8.5	-3.5
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	49.1	51.7	-5.0	7.7	6.8	0.9
Saskatoon - Biggar	208.7	190.2	9.7	4.8	8.2	-3.4
Yorkton - Melville	35.6	35.9	-0.8	6.1	5.3	0.8
Prince Albert and Northern	94.5	94.4	0.1	5.9	7.4	-1.5

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

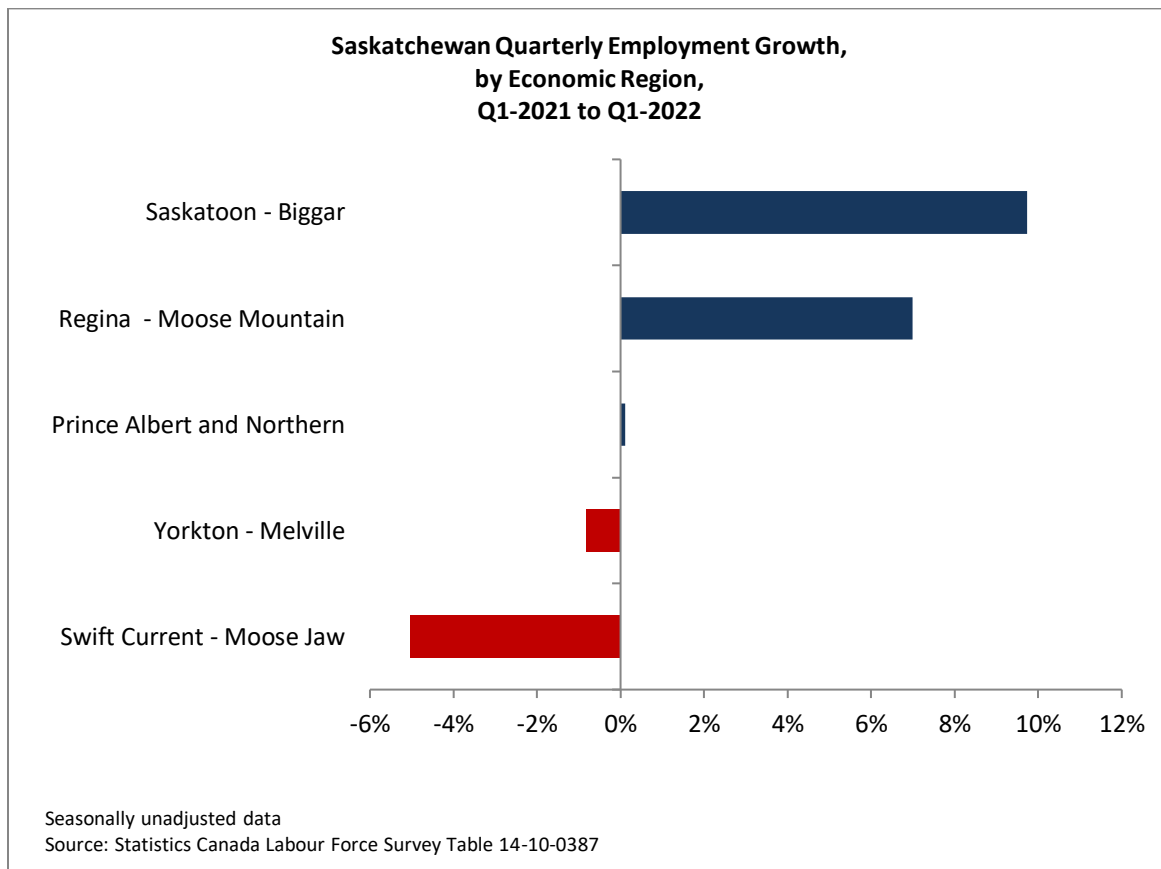
A key contributor to employment growth in the **Saskatoon – Biggar** region was a year-over-year increase of 21,300 jobs (+14.2%) in the services-producing sector. A recent example of new business activity is Saskatoon's Purrfect Cup Cat Café, set to open in April.⁵⁰ Also in Saskatoon, the Government of Saskatchewan and Prairie Harm Reduction are launching a new program for at-risk youth. The program will have an annual cost of over \$662,000 and will offer supports for mental health and addictions issues.⁵¹

Several construction projects are expected to contribute to continuing growth in the region. AGT Food and Ingredients Inc. is building an oat-milling facility in Aberdeen, a small community northeast of Saskatoon. The facility should be up and running by the end of the year.⁵² The Government of Saskatchewan is providing \$4 million to Saskatchewan Polytechnic for the planning and development of a new campus in Saskatoon. There are currently 11 locations across the city and the goal is to bring them all to one site.⁵³

Compared to Q1-2021, 11,700 (+7.0%) more people were employed in **Regina – Moose Mountain**, the only region in Saskatchewan to post gains in both the goods-producing sector and services-producing sector (+17.6% and +4.5%). In addition, the region's unemployment rate dropped 3.5 percentage points to 5.0%. In a boost for the food services industry, Regina City Council has approved the development of a new sustainable Tim Hortons,

which will feature eco-friendly design technologies such as a “living” roof and walls. It is expected to create 35 jobs.⁵⁴

Construction has also begun on Regina’s urgent care centre, which is scheduled to open in 2023 and will provide 24-hour mental health and addictions support.⁵⁵ Emergency and acute care services at the Redvers Health Centre fully resumed in March after closing in the fall of 2021 due to staffing shortages.⁵⁶



Compared to the previous year, employment grew 100 (+0.1%) in the **Prince Albert and Northern** region. Meanwhile, the region’s unemployment rate fell 1.5 percentage points to 5.9%. Designs are in place for a new school in Carrot River and the \$21 million project is now accepting tenders from construction companies. The work is expected to take up to two years to complete.⁵⁷ Also in Carrot River, Edgewood Forest Products is upgrading its facilities. Work on a new biorefinery will begin in May 2022 and create up to 40 construction jobs as well as 15 permanent operating jobs.⁵⁸

A new Red Apple retail outlet recently opened in Humbolt with six part-time employees, two full-time employees, and a full-time store manager.⁵⁹ Finally, Sask. Aquatic Adventures is opening two new waterparks this summer. The Aquatic Adventure Parks in Candle Lake Provincial Park and Meadow Lake Provincial Park will open in June and run seven days a week.⁶⁰

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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