



Labour Market Bulletin

Saskatchewan

April 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 from the COVID-19 pandemic lost ground in April as employment declined for the second consecutive month. The province had been adding jobs on a monthly basis since November when employment stalled in March, with 4,500 fewer positions than in February. In April, it fell by a further 900. Gains in full-time employment (+5,100) were more than offset by losses in part-time employment (-6,000). Public sector employment increased 1,900 while private sector employment dipped by 2,300.¹

Taking a broader view, however, the employment picture was more positive. On an annual basis, employment was up 3.2% in April (+17,700) as a result of growth in full-time jobs, with increases in both public and private sectors (+6.5% and 2.7% respectively).

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Data	April 2022	March 2022	April 2021	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Population 15 + ('000)	895.7	894.3	889.4	1.4	0.2	6.3	0.7
Labour Force ('000)	609.9	608.0	597.6	1.9	0.3	12.3	2.1
Employment ('000)	576.6	577.5	558.9	-0.9	-0.2	17.7	3.2
Full-Time ('000)	474.6	469.5	448.6	5.1	1.1	26.0	5.8
Part-Time ('000)	102.0	108.0	110.2	-6.0	-5.6	-8.2	-7.4
Unemployment ('000)	33.3	30.5	38.8	2.8	9.2	-5.5	-14.2
Unemployment Rate (%)	5.5	5.0	6.5	0.5	-	-1.0	-
Participation Rate (%)	68.1	68.0	67.2	0.1	-	0.9	-
Employment Rate (%)	64.4	64.6	62.8	-0.2	-	1.6	-

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

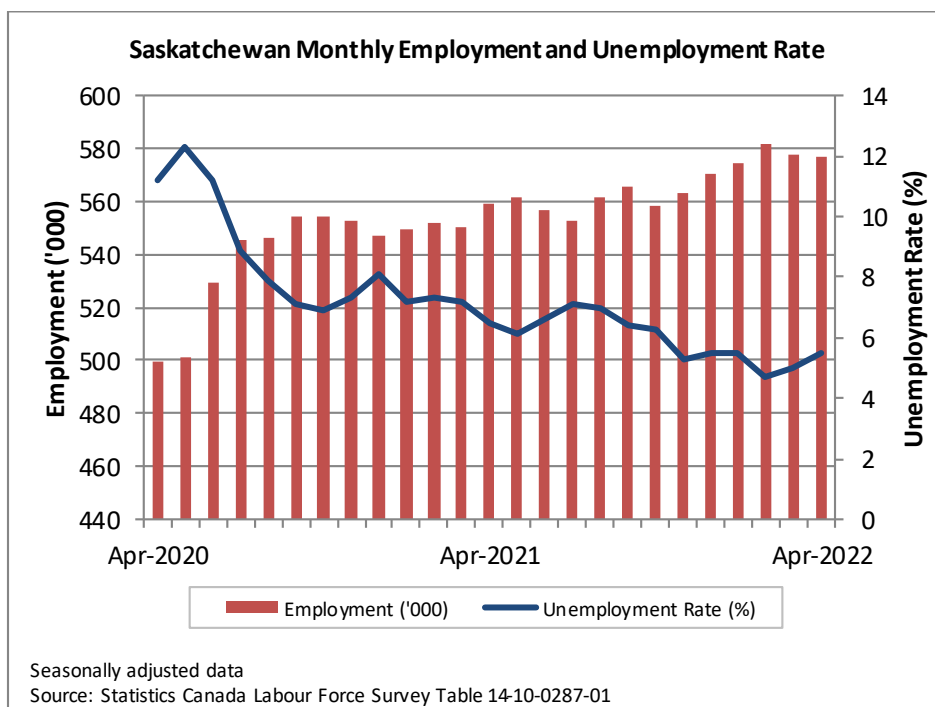
Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0287-01, formerly CANSIM 282-0087

Comparing April’s employment numbers with February 2020, just prior to the onset of the pandemic, employment was up 2,500 (0.4%), with significant growth in the public sector (9.6%) and little change in the private sector (-0.2%). The working age population also grew by 7,600 over that time period (0.9%), so that should be considered when comparing current and pre-pandemic employment.

Self-employment in Saskatchewan was down on a monthly basis in April (-400, or -0.5%), and has fallen significantly since February 2020 (-10,700 or -10.9%). This category includes small business owners, who have faced numerous challenges throughout the pandemic. With federal COVID-19 relief programs ending in May, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business reports that only 42% of Saskatchewan small businesses surveyed are operating at or above normal revenues.^{2,3}

While Saskatchewan lifted all public health measures related to COVID-19 earlier this year, high levels of transmission and illness continue to have an impact on the economy. The province reached a new record high for hospitalizations in April, straining capacity in health care facilities, and some officials predict the surge could continue for another month.^{4,5} Despite a recent promotional push by the provincial government, uptake of third doses of the COVID-19 vaccine continues to lag. Just 52.7% of adults have received a booster shot, compared to 57.8% nationally.⁶

A key impact of the pandemic has been labour shortages across many industries, including health care, construction, and manufacturing. The provincial government has introduced new legislation to ensure skilled workers will have their credentials recognized when relocating to Saskatchewan.⁷ The province also announced it will be raising the minimum wage substantially this fall, to \$13/hour from the current \$11.81. Next year, the wage will increase to \$14/hour and to \$15 in 2024. Approximately 45,000 workers will be affected by the change, which will also move Saskatchewan out of its current position as the province with the lowest minimum wage in the country.⁸



Saskatchewan's unemployment rate sat at 5.5% in April. The province posted a rate of 6.4% in February 2020 just prior to the onset of the pandemic and recorded a peak of 12.3% in May of 2020. The rate ranged from 7.3% to 5.3% throughout 2021 before falling to a nearly seven-year low (4.7%) in February. In the last two months, Saskatchewan's unemployment rate has inched upward and is currently above the national average (5.2%) and in the middle of the pack among provinces, higher than Manitoba and British Columbia but lower than Alberta.

Saskatchewan Monthly Unemployment Rates, by Gender and Age

Seasonally Adjusted Data	April 2022 (%)	March 2022 (%)	April 2021 (%)	Monthly Variation (% points)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Total	5.5	5.0	6.5	0.5	-1.0
25 years and over	4.6	4.5	5.4	0.1	-0.8
Men - 25 years and over	4.9	5.0	5.9	-0.1	-1.0
Women - 25 years and over	4.2	4.0	4.9	0.2	-0.7
15 to 24 years	10.3	7.8	12.6	2.5	-2.3
Men - 15 to 24 years	13.0	8.2	14.3	4.8	-1.3
Women - 15 to 24 years	7.2	7.4	10.7	-0.2	-3.5

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

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

The unemployment rate among young workers in Saskatchewan followed a sharper upward trend. The rate for those between 15 and 24 was the lowest in the country in February, at 5.9%, but climbed to 7.8% in March and then further to 10.3% in April. Young men in particular have seen poor labour market outcomes over the past two months, with their unemployment rate jumping 2.9 percentage points in March and another 4.8 in April. The unemployment rate for young women, by contrast, increased by just 0.4 percentage points from February to April. There was a significant gap between the two groups, with April's unemployment rate for young men nearly double that of their female counterparts. This disparity is not seen between men and women 25 years of age and older.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Employment in Saskatchewan's **goods-producing sector** decreased both month-to-month (-1.0%) and year-over-year (-7.6%) in April. It also remained well below pre-pandemic levels, down -10.7% from February 2020. Employment in the **services-producing sector**, on the other hand, has risen 41% since pre-pandemic. It was up on an annual basis (+6.7%) and little-changed month-to-month (+0.1%).

Within the goods-producing sector, employment in **agriculture** was up from March (400, or 1.6%) but down significantly year-over-year (-7,300 or -22.5%). The 2021 harvest season was hampered by severe drought and extreme temperatures, resulting in production losses of nearly 47% from the previous year.⁹ Parts of the central and southwestern regions were categorized by Agriculture Canada as having extreme drought conditions at the end of March, but improvement is still expected.¹⁰ Late-April blizzards brought some moisture to the province, but also delayed plans for seeding and caused some cattle ranchers to lose calves.¹¹

The governments of Canada and Saskatchewan are providing more than \$885,000 to fund 43 agricultural research projects in the province. The funding is offered through the Agriculture Demonstration of Practices and

Technologies program, which is meant to evaluate new agriculture technologies and practices so those that are successful can be implemented by local producers.

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Industry

Seasonally Adjusted Data ('000)	April 2022	March 2022	April 2021	Monthly Variation		Yearly Variation	
				Number	%	Number	%
Total employed, all industries	576.6	577.5	558.9	-0.9	-0.2	17.7	3.2
Goods-producing sector	127.1	128.4	137.5	-1.3	-1.0	-10.4	-7.6
Agriculture	25.2	24.8	32.5	0.4	1.6	-7.3	-22.5
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	18.1	18.6	21.0	-0.5	-2.7	-2.9	-13.8
Utilities	6.4	6.0	5.5	0.4	6.7	0.9	16.4
Construction	46.4	47.6	46.6	-1.2	-2.5	-0.2	-0.4
Manufacturing	31.0	31.4	31.9	-0.4	-1.3	-0.9	-2.8
Services-producing sector	449.5	449.1	421.3	0.4	0.1	28.2	6.7
Trade	95.7	98.7	89.0	-3.0	-3.0	6.7	7.5
Transportation and warehousing	26.7	25.2	20.7	1.5	6.0	6.0	29.0
Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	31.3	30.9	26.7	0.4	1.3	4.6	17.2
Professional, scientific and technical services	27.6	27.3	29.7	0.3	1.1	-2.1	-7.1
Business, building and other support services	14.0	16.2	15.0	-2.2	-13.6	-1.0	-6.7
Educational services	49.2	49.3	45.4	-0.1	-0.2	3.8	8.4
Health care and social assistance	89.1	88.7	86.5	0.4	0.5	2.6	3.0
Information, culture and recreation	20.5	18.9	15.8	1.6	8.5	4.7	29.7
Accommodation and food services	32.9	32.3	29.3	0.6	1.9	3.6	12.3
Other services	25.9	25.8	27.4	0.1	0.4	-1.5	-5.5
Public administration	36.5	35.6	35.8	0.9	2.5	0.7	2.0

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Table 14-10-0355, formerly CANSIM 282-0088

Employment fell by -2.7% on the month in **resource extraction**, which includes forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas. The industry also lost 2,900 jobs (-13.8%) when compared with April of last year. Most losses have been in mining, but the outlook may be improving. Earlier this year Cameco announced plans to restart production at its McArthur River/Key Lake uranium operations, aiming to nearly double its workforce to 900 by 2025.¹² Saskatoon-based potash giant Nutrien is ramping up production in response to supply uncertainty caused by the war in Ukraine. In March, the company advised it would be increasing its output by one million tonnes this year, expecting to account for 70% of global production by the end of 2022.¹³ Recently, Nutrien's interim CEO stated they may increase this target further, which would mean even more additional hiring at the company's six Saskatchewan mines.¹⁴

As the potash industry looks to be picking up in the province, four Saskatchewan First Nations have partnered with potash producer Mosaic and the International Minerals Innovation Institute to create a specialized course for Indigenous potash workers. The program uses high-end gaming computers to teach digital automation skills, and includes eight weeks of in-class training at Cowessess First Nation followed by an onsite work practicum at Mosaic's K3 mine near Esterhazy.¹⁵

The **manufacturing** industry dropped 400 jobs (-1.3%) on the month, and 900 (-2.8%) year-over-year. However, a number of upcoming projects should spur growth, especially in agricultural processing. Cargill is planning to build a \$350 million canola crushing facility just outside of Regina, creating 50 full-time jobs when it opens in 2024.¹⁶ The Cargill plant is one of five canola crush projects announced in the province in the last year.

In hopes of attracting even further investment, the provincial government has expanded the Saskatchewan Value-added Agriculture Incentive. Under the program, any single new processing project could potentially claim up to \$250 million in tax rebates.¹⁷

Turning to the services-producing sector, employment in **transportation and warehousing** made a strong recovery on an annual basis, up 29% from April 2021, as well as 6.0% from the previous month. On April 1, the air travel industry welcomed the federal government's lifting of the requirement that vaccinated travellers provide a negative pre-entry COVID-19 test when entering Canada. Airport authorities in Regina and Saskatoon had been seeing passenger volumes of roughly half that of pre-pandemic operations, but expect a significant increase in the coming months. By June, according to one official, passenger counts could be back to 90%.^{18,19}

The **professional, scientific and technical services** industry added jobs on both a monthly basis, (+1.1%) but posted losses year-over-year (-7.1%). The Government of Saskatchewan recently consolidated the funding and support of the province's research and technology industry under a single agency: Innovation Saskatchewan. The agency's mandate is to triple the tech sector in Saskatchewan by 2030.²⁰ The Province has also increased the tax credit cap for the Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive, which offers a 45% tax credit to those who invest in technology start-up businesses.²¹ Meanwhile, the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and Trace Associates Inc. have launched a new Indigenous-owned consulting business, Airea Consulting LP. The firm will offer environmental science and engineering advisory services, and hopes to provide employment opportunities for Indigenous workers in a sector they have previously been underrepresented in. A portion of the company's profits will be invested in Meadow Lake Tribal Council's nine First Nations, including in job training and job creation.²²

Employment in **health care and social assistance** rose slightly from March to April (0.5%), and more significantly since April of 2021 (3.0%). Despite job growth of over 11% since the start of the pandemic, Saskatchewan is contending with severe understaffing in the health care system. Walk-in services in Warman and Martensville, near Saskatoon, have been suspended amid a shortage of physicians.²³ There have been several high profile cases of doctors leaving the province or closing their practices due to the stress of the pandemic, and a recent survey of physicians found that over half of respondents said they planned to reduce their clinic hours over the next two years.^{24,25}

Emergency departments faced staffing and capacity issues amid record COVID-19 hospitalizations in April, with some hospitals caring for patients in extra spaces such as waiting rooms.^{26,27} Labour shortages persist in nursing and increasingly the Saskatchewan Health Authority is hiring contract nurses to fill gaps in the health care system. There are 260 contract nurses hired for 2022, more than five times the number hired in 2019.²⁸ In mental health care, dozens of beds at the inpatient facility in North Battleford are not operational due to inadequate staffing. There are at least 165 vacant registered psychiatric nurse positions throughout the province, with RPNs retiring faster than they are being trained.²⁹

The Government of Saskatchewan has added a total six new ICU beds in three hospitals, with plans for an additional five later this year. Ten new high-acuity beds are slated for Regina General Hospital and are hoped to reduce demands on ICU capacity.³⁰ The provincial government is also seeking to expand access to virtual health care, signing a contract with Lumecca, a Saskatchewan company that provides a platform to facilitate remote appointments. The service will be available to 3,500 health care providers across the province.³¹

Employment in **accommodation and food services** climbed by 1.9% on the month, and improved considerably year-over-year (+12.3%). About 3,600 more people were working in the industry in April 2022 than in the same period in 2021, when restaurants were unable to open for in-person dining until well into May due to provincial restrictions.³² The industry has a long road to a full recovery from the pandemic, however, with employment still 13.7% below February 2020 levels.

In an effort to address the industry's labour shortage, the Government of Saskatchewan is providing \$1 million to Hospitality Saskatchewan for its "Belong Saskatchewan" recruitment campaign. Its focus is on people who are working in Canada temporarily but hoping to achieve permanent residency.³³ Meanwhile, Restaurants Canada has voiced its opposition to the Province's decision to hike the minimum wage above its usual Consumer Price Index formula, arguing that it will make it more difficult for cash-strapped business owners to hire back employees.³⁴

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

On a year-over-year basis, employment was up in three of five economic regions. Yearly job losses of -2,900 (-5.5%) and -400 (-0.4%) occurred in **Swift Current – Moose Jaw** and **Prince Albert and Northern**, respectively. **Saskatoon – Biggar** led the regions in employment growth, adding 19,000 jobs.

Saskatchewan Monthly Labour Force Statistics, by Economic Region

3-Month Moving Averages Seasonally Unadjusted Data	Employment			Unemployment Rate		
	April 2022 ('000)	April 2021 ('000)	Yearly Variation (%)	April 2022 (%)	April 2021 (%)	Yearly Variation (% points)
Saskatchewan	568.7	543.5	4.6	5.6	7.8	-2.2
Economic Regions						
Regina - Moose Mountain	178.5	169.7	5.2	5.9	8.8	-2.9
Swift Current - Moose Jaw	50.0	52.9	-5.5	6.0	6.7	-0.7
Saskatoon - Biggar	210.5	191.5	9.9	4.8	8.1	-3.3
Yorkton - Melville	36.1	35.4	2.0	5.0	5.1	-0.1
Prince Albert and Northern	93.7	94.1	-0.4	6.6	6.8	-0.2

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 posted strong employment gains (+9.9%) and the region's unemployment rate dropped 3.3 percentage points to 4.8%, the lowest in the province. A key contributor is the increase of 22,000 jobs (+14.7%) in the region's services-producing sector over the past year. One upcoming development is a new Dairy Queen franchise scheduled to begin construction in Outlook this fall. The restaurant is anticipated to open in April 2023 and create up to 20 jobs.³⁵

Saskatoon-based Great Western Brewing Company is spending \$30 million to upgrade and expand their facility, increasing production capacity and adding 7,000 square feet of commercial lease space.³⁶ The City of Saskatoon is building a state-of-the-art fire station next to the University of Saskatchewan main campus with the intention to be open by summer 2023.³⁷

Compared to the previous year, employment in **Regina – Moose Mountain** increased by 8,800 (+5.2%), while the unemployment rate dropped 2.9 percentage points to 5.9%. Employment gains of 5,600 (+4.1%) in the services-producing sector and 3,100 (+9.7%) in the goods-producing sector contributed to the region's growth. Unfortunately, City Collateral, a pawnshop in Regina, has permanently closed after 57 years in business. The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic were a factor in the closure.³⁸

Construction has begun on Regina's 24-hour mental health and addictions urgent care centre. The facility is set to open in 2023, and a similar facility for Saskatoon is in the planning stages.³⁹ The Co-op Refinery Complex is spending more than \$100 million on its annual turnaround, creating approximately 1,200 temporary jobs and lasting until June.⁴⁰

On an annual basis, the **Prince Albert and Northern** region lost 400 jobs (-0.4%), with employment declining in the past six consecutive months. In addition, looking over the last two years, the region's total employment is at its lowest level since July 2020. Year-over-year, the region's unemployment rate fell 0.2 percentage points to 6.6%.

The Humboldt Golf Club is planning to build an event space on their property, at a cost of \$513,000.⁴¹ Meanwhile in Melfort, construction on a community care home for people with disabilities will soon start and is expected to be open by the fall of 2023.⁴² Furthermore, construction to replace the roof on the Melfort Public Library has begun and is scheduled to be done by the end of 2022.⁴³

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.

Prepared by: Labour Market Information (LMI) Directorate, Service Canada, Saskatchewan

For further information, please contact the LMI team at: http://www.esdc.gc.ca/cgi-bin/contact/edsc-esdc/eng/contact_us.aspx?section=lmi

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

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada as represented by Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022, all rights reserved

-
- ¹ Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0288-01. [Employment by class of worker, monthly, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted, last 5 months \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#). Accessed May 6, 2022.
 - ² Global News (May 7, 2022). [Canada's COVID-19 supports have come to an end. Businesses say they still need help.](#)
 - ³ Canadian Federation of Independent Business. [Small Business Recovery Dashboard \(smallbusinesseveryday.ca\)](#). Accessed May 6, 2022.
 - ⁴ CBC News (April 21, 2022). [Record 417 COVID-19 hospitalizations in Saskatchewan, 22 more deaths reported.](#)
 - ⁵ SaskNow.com (April 19, 2022). ['We should be able to manage:' Provinces experiencing rise in COVID hospitalizations.](#)
 - ⁶ Government of Canada. [COVID-19 vaccination coverage in Canada](#). Accessed May 6, 2022.
 - ⁷ Government of Saskatchewan (April 6, 2022). [New Legislation Supports Attracting Skilled Workers to Saskatchewan.](#)
 - ⁸ CBC News (May 3, 2022). [Sask. to increase minimum wage to \\$13 in Oct., \\$15 in 2024.](#)
 - ⁹ Government of Saskatchewan. [Saskatchewan's Dashboard - Crop Production](#). Accessed May 6, 2022.
 - ¹⁰ Agriculture Canada. [Canadian Drought Outlook - agriculture.canada.ca](#). Accessed May 6, 2022.
 - ¹¹ Global News (April 28, 2022). [Assistance available for Saskatchewan ranchers impacted by spring snowstorm.](#)
 - ¹² CTV News (February 9, 2022). [Cameco to restart Sask. facilities, hiring hundreds more workers.](#)
 - ¹³ Global News (March 17, 2022). [Nutrien increasing potash production due to uncertainty in eastern Europe.](#)
 - ¹⁴ CBC News (May 4, 2022). [Nutrien earns \\$1.4B US, hikes guidance as Ukraine war drives fertilizer demand.](#)
 - ¹⁵ CBC News (April 12, 2022). [Demand for Indigenous potash workers leads to tailor-made training program at Cowessess.](#)
 - ¹⁶ Global News (April 6, 2022). [New canola crusher slated for Regina's Global Transportation Hub - Regina.](#)
 - ¹⁷ Saskatoon StarPhoenix (April 8, 2022). [Sask. ag processing incentive aims to boost investment.](#)
 - ¹⁸ Global News (April 1, 2022). [Saskatchewan airports expect increase in travel as testing requirement drops.](#)
 - ¹⁹ Global News (April 27, 2022). [Saskatchewan airports see increase in passengers since COVID restrictions lifted.](#)
 - ²⁰ Innovation Saskatchewan (April 4, 2022). [Growing a Strong Economy Through Innovation and Technology.](#)
 - ²¹ Innovation Saskatchewan (April 5, 2022). [Supporting a Growing Saskatchewan Technology and Research Sector.](#)
 - ²² Aire Consulting. (April 6, 2022). [New Indigenous-Owned Environmental Consulting Company.](#)
 - ²³ CBC News (April 13, 2022). [Medical clinics in Warman, Martensville don't have enough doctors, physicians say](#)
 - ²⁴ Global News (March 17, 2022). [Sask. NDP renews calls for government to do more to keep doctors in province.](#)
 - ²⁵ CBC News (April 27, 2022). [Pandemic worsened mental health among Sask. physicians: SMA survey.](#)
 - ²⁶ CBC News (April 12, 2022). [Surge capacity forces Saskatoon hospital to expand ER into waiting room.](#)
-

-
- ²⁷ CBC News (April 20, 2022) [Doctors say Sask. emergency departments understaffed, overcapacity, struggling to provide care.](#)
- ²⁸ Saskatoon StarPhoenix (April 23, 2022). [More than 200 contract nurses filling gaps in Sask. health care.](#)
- ²⁹ CBC News (April 11, 2022). [Sask. people unable to access timely mental health treatment due to lack of psychiatric staff.](#)
- ³⁰ Government of Saskatchewan (May 2, 2022). [Government Expands Intensive Care Unit Capacity Across Saskatchewan.](#)
- ³¹ CBC News (April 14, 2022). [Virtual health care getting a boost in Sask. after province signs multi-year deal with service provider.](#)
- ³² CJME (May 5, 2022). [As Saskatchewan heats up, patios are eager for first full season in years.](#)
- ³³ Government of Saskatchewan (April 6, 2022). [Saskatchewan Announces Investment of \\$1 Million to Promote Careers in the Hospitality Sector.](#)
- ³⁴ Restaurants Canada (May 4, 2022). [Saskatchewan restaurateurs surprised by province's decision to abandon predictable minimum wage indexation formula with \\$3 per hour minimum wage increase over next three years](#)
- ³⁵ SaskToday (April 8, 2022). [Outlook to get Dairy Queen location next year.](#)
- ³⁶ CTV News (March 30, 2022). [Saskatoon city council clears way for \\$30M Great Western Brewing Company expansion.](#)
- ³⁷ University of Saskatchewan (April 21, 2022). [New fire hall to be built next to USask main campus.](#)
- ³⁸ Global News (April 7, 2022). [COVID-19 pandemic forces Regina pawn shop to close after 57 years in business.](#)
- ³⁹ CTV News (March 31, 2022). [Urgent care facility being built in Regina.](#)
- ⁴⁰ Global News (April 18, 2022). [Co-op Refinery Complex to invest over \\$100M in annual turnaround, create 1,200 temporary jobs.](#)
- ⁴¹ SaskToday (April 13, 2022). [Humboldt council approves \\$150,000 golf club loan for events centre.](#)
- ⁴² northeastNOW (March 16, 2022). [New community care home coming to Melfort.](#)
- ⁴³ SaskToday (March 30, 2022). [Melfort Public Library roof replacement to be completed by 2023.](#)