

ABSTRACT – Average year-to-date employment is up and the unemployment rate and the number of unemployed are down. Housing starts, non-residential building permits, new motor vehicle sales, and retail trade are down while residential building permits, manufacturing sales, exports, wholesale trade, restaurant receipts are up.

The Saskatchewan economy continues to show a diverse range of results in the last quarter of 2018 and into the first 2 months of 2019...

- Total employment in Saskatchewan was up 1.5% or 8,350 positions in February 2019 over the same period in 2018.
- Year-to-date employment in February 2019 was up over the same period in 2018 in Agriculture (3550), Utilities (200), Manufacturing (2,100), Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing (3,050), Business, building and other support services (1,050), Educational services (2,900), Health care and social assistance (4,250), Accommodation and food services (2,300), and Other services (1,500).
- Year-to-date employment in February 2019 was down in Resource Extraction (-2300), Wholesale and Retail Trade (-5250), Transportation and warehousing (-3050), Information, culture and recreation (-150), and Public administration (-1000).
- After a weak performance in 2017, construction employment continued to decline in 2018 and into the first 2 months month of 2019. Year-to-date February construction employment was down by 850 positions from the same period in 2018 with weakening residential and non-residential construction.
- The average year-to-date unemployment rate dropped from 6.0 % in February 2018, to 5.9% in February 2019. Year-to-date, the average number of unemployed is down from 35,600 in February 2018 to 35,150 in February 2019 on the strength of surging employment growth.
- February 2019 total year-to-date housing starts are down by -421 units or -67.3%. Year-to-date declines were noted in singles (-36 units or -24.2%), semi-detached (-12 units or -60.0%), row (-35 units or -53.8%), and apartment and other types (-338 units or -86.2%).
- January 2019 year to date building permits are down -11.0% over the same period in 2018. Sub sectors that posted increases were: residential (20.8%) and industrial (150.6%). During the same time period, commercial (-23.6%) and institutional and governmental (88.2%) posted declines.
- December 2018 year-to-date retail trade is down by -0.5% over the same period in 2017. Sub sectors that posted increases were: Gasoline stations (4.5%), Electronics and appliance stores (2.1%), Building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers (0.5%), Health and personal care stores (0.1%), Grocery stores (2.0%), Beer, wine and liquor stores (12.1%), General merchandise stores (1.7%), and All other (1.8%). During the same time period, New car dealers (-7.6%), Used car dealers (-21.0%), Furniture and home furnishings

stores (-8.1%), Clothing and clothing accessories stores (-0.1%), and Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores (-4.7%) posted declines.

- December 2018 year-to-date manufacturing sales are up by +11.1% over the same period in 2017. Sub sectors that posted increases were: Food manufacturing sales (10.9%), Machinery manufacturing sales (0.5%), Fabricated metal product manufacturing sales (14.4%), and All other Manufacturing sales (18.3%). Sub sectors that posted decreases were limited to Chemical manufacturing sales (-4.3%).
- December 2018 year-to-date new motor vehicle sales were down -10.8% from December year-to-date 2017. Both New passenger cars sales and new minivans, sport-utility vehicles, light and heavy trucks, vans and buses sales were down -18.5% and -9.4%, respectively.
- Total International merchandise exports were up 11.3% year to date December 2018 over December 2017. Sub sectors that posted increases were: Energy products (21.2%), Metal ores and non-metallic minerals (26.1%), Metal and non-metallic mineral products (68.5%), Forestry products and building and packaging materials (21.1%), Industrial machinery, equipment and parts (21.8%), and Motor vehicles and parts (6.6%). Sub sectors that posted decreases were: Farm, fishing and intermediate food products (-1.0%), Basic and industrial chemical, plastic and rubber products (-9.9%), Electronic and electrical equipment and parts (-5.8%), Aircraft and other transportation equipment and parts (-61.9%), Consumer goods (-18.4%), and Special transactions (-0.1%).
- December 2018 year-to-date wholesale trade was up 4.2% over the same period in 2017. Food, beverage and tobacco merchant wholesalers (10.2%), Agricultural supplies merchant wholesalers (6.4%), Machinery, equipment and supplies merchant wholesalers (1.2%), Building material and supplies merchant wholesalers (6.0%), and All other (5.5%) all posted increases while Farm product merchant wholesalers (-2.1%) saw a decline.
- December 2018 year-to-date restaurant receipts were up 1.6% over the same period in 2017. Within restaurant receipts, Full-service restaurants (2.3%), and Limited-service eating places (2.9%) increased. At the same time, declines were noted in Special food services (-10.7%) and Drinking places (alcoholic beverages) (-3.6%).
- With the pace of GDP growth at the national level suggesting that the economy is operating at close to full capacity, the Bank of Canada raised the overnight rate to 1.75 per cent on October 24 2018, up from 1.5 per cent. This represents the highest rate since December 2008. However, the Bank of Canada held the rate at this level in March 2019 citing uncertainty stemming from a sudden and unexpected deceleration in GDP growth in the final quarter of 2018.
- 2018 Q4 Provincial population was up 0.6% over 2017 Q4 (1,165,903) on the strength of international in-migration. This can be expected to continue through 2019 with a recovering labour market.
- The Conference Board of Canada forecasts the Provincial economy to post a 1.6 per cent real GDP gain in 2019, following an identical 1.6 percent increase in 2018.

INDICATOR	MONTH TO MONTH				YEAR TO DATE				
	Feb 2018	Feb 2019	CHANGE	% CHANGE	Feb 2018	Feb 2019	CHANGE	% CHANGE	
Employment	555,800	564,800	9,000	1.6%	557,950	566,300	8,350	1.5%	↑
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.0	5.9	-0.1	-1.7%	6.0	5.9	-0.2	-2.5%	↑
Housing Starts Total (Units)	221	72	-149	-67.4%	626	205	-421	-67.3%	↓
	Jan 2018	Jan 2019	CHANGE	% CHANGE	Jan 2018	Jan 2019	CHANGE	% CHANGE	
Consumer Price Index (2002=100)	136.4	137.4	1.0	0.7%	136.4	137.4	1.0	0.7%	↑
Building Permits Total (\$000s)	120,981	107,615	-13,366	-11.0%	120,981	107,615	-13,366	-11.0%	↓
Building Permits Residential (\$000s)	45,004	54,372	9,368	20.8%	45,004	54,372	9,368	20.8%	↑
Building Permits Non-Residential (\$000s)	75,977	53,243	-22,734	-29.9%	75,977	53,243	-22,734	-29.9%	↓
	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	CHANGE	% CHANGE	
International trade domestic exports: Total of all merchandise (\$000s)	2,423,031	2,513,180	90,149	3.7%	27,962,767	31,123,833	3,161,066	11.3%	↑
International trade imports: Total of all merchandise (\$000s)	1,090,215	927,192	-163,023	-15.0%	11,534,551	11,850,154	315,603	2.7%	↑
Net international merchandise trade (\$000s)	1,332,816	1,585,988	13,079	50.3%	16,428,216	19,273,679	2,845,463	17.3%	↑
Retail trade: Total (\$000s)	1,724,182	1,657,633	-66,549	-3.9%	19,577,066	19,473,740	-103,326	-0.5%	↓
Manufacturing Sales: Total	1,235,090	1,260,129	25,039	2.0%	16,086,891	17,866,925	1,780,034	11.1%	↑
New motor vehicles sales: Total (units)	3,732	3,161	-571	-15.3%	56,292	50,192	-6,100	-10.8%	↓
Wholesale trade: Total (\$000s)	1,898,021	2,229,688	331,667	17.5%	25,982,549	27,067,263	1,084,714	4.2%	↑
Restaurant receipts: Total, food services and drinking places (\$000s)	159,629	160,205	576	0.4%	1,887,244	1,916,592	29,348	1.6%	↑
	2017 Q4	2018 Q4	CHANGE	% CHANGE					
Population (persons) July 1	1,155,034	1,165,903	10,869	0.9%	-	-	-	-	↑
	2018	2019 (forecast)	CHANGE	% CHANGE					
Gross Domestic Product (2007 \$M)	60,978	61,924	946	1.6%	-	-	-	-	↑

Sources: Statistics Canada Tables 14-10-0017-01, 34-10-0143-01, 14-10-0355-01, 18-10-0004-01, 34-10-0066-01, 17-10-0005-01, 17-10-0008-01, 20-10-0009-01, 16-10-0048-01, 20-10-0001-01, 21-10-0019-01, 12-10-0012-01 and Conference Board of Canada Metropolitan Outlook Winter 2018. Note: All data presented above is raw/not seasonally adjusted.