

## **Saskatchewan's Growth Has Some Catching Up To Do**

The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce has completed its 2010 mid-year review of its indicators from its *Sustainable Growth Strategy for a New Saskatchewan*.

“The aim of the Chamber’s Growth Strategy is to support and facilitate sustainable growth that benefits all of Saskatchewan,” said CEO Steve McLellan. “Our province’s Aboriginal employment rate is one of the most prevalent issues. After growing strongly in 2007, up to 59.6%, the employment rate among our Aboriginal people has fallen, hitting 58.3% in 2008 and 57.5% in 2009; with declining employment and a growing aboriginal population this must be addressed.”

Also of concern, Saskatchewan’s Aboriginal employment rate is behind Canada at a rate of 61%, and behind both of our neighbouring provinces, Alberta (62%) and Manitoba (64%). The Growth Strategy has projected that one half of the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal gap in employment rates must be closed by 2030.

The Chamber’s Growth Strategy projects the population must grow at a rate of 1.75% until 2030 to ensure we can afford the cost of serving our aging population while continuing to provide a range of public services and a high standard of living.

“In 2009 we came close to hitting this target with a rate of 1.6% population growth,” said McLellan. “But we need to continue and in fact, accelerate population to keep up with demand.”

Saskatchewan’s population growth is noticeable when compared to other areas in Canada. Since 2006, Saskatchewan’s population has grown by an average of 1.3% per year; above the national average of 1.2% and higher than Manitoba which has averaged 1.1%. However, we still fall short when compared to the 2.5% average annual growth rate in Alberta.

Saskatchewan will also start to feel the impacts of the global recession although they will be milder here than in other regions. Measuring overall economic prosperity through GDP per capita, Saskatchewan grew by 2.6% in 2007 and 3.0% in 2008, both of which were above the 2.4% rate needed to meet the Growth Strategy target. Nevertheless, these strong gains were offset by a drop in 2009 of 7.5%.

“Saskatchewan will recover from this dip,” stated McLellan. “We need to utilize this information to develop, strengthen and implement our plans for a growing population and economy. Preparing now will help us avoid the growing pains that have plagued other jurisdictions.”

*To view the complete “Sustainable Growth Strategy for a New Saskatchewan” Summer 2010 Update visit [www.saskchamber.com](http://www.saskchamber.com).*

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