

GROWING HOME

Economic Development Regina sets the Queen City up for success

BY BROOK THALGOTT

Saskatchewan is entering a new era in growth, thanks to a confluence of market demands, emerging economic drivers, and sound strategy. The province is home to the resources the world wants and needs and is embracing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver. The question is, how do we build on our current strengths to create even greater prosperity now and in the future?

Enter Economic Development Regina

Economic Development Regina (EDR) is asking this very question. Tasked with building the city's economic prospects through business and investment attraction, the agency has built a team ready to take on the challenge. Headed by CEO Chris Lane, EDR is ready to show the world that Regina is a great place to start or grow a business, invest in the future, and possibly most importantly—build a life.

State of the nation

The biggest issue facing Regina isn't a lack of investment, although attracting more money is always part of the plan. The city has seen \$4 billion in new infrastructure investments over the last two years alone, much of that related to Regina's massive canola opportunity. Those projects reflect growing demand for Saskatchewan's resources—particularly from the “three fs”: food, fuel, and fertilizer—have underlined the need for the people to do the work to make the economy “go.”

“One of the most common concerns we hear about Regina's economy is the availability of labour and talent,” Lane says. “Whether we're talking about global economic influences, recent capital investment announcements, or the growing demand from employers and projects across the board, our message is clear: Regina is a place of remarkable opportunity.”

It's a good problem, until it's not.

Canada's Queen City, Regina, is located on Treaty 4 land and within the traditional territory of the Métis. First established as the seat of the territorial government in 1882, it was formally named Regina by Princess Louise, the daughter of Queen Victoria the ruling monarch at the time. The city was named the provincial capital in 1906.



THE REGINA FARMERS' MARKET CONNECTS LOCAL PRODUCERS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS. PHOTO BY MARK GRESCHNER

While Regina is growing steadily with expectations that the regional population will hit 300,000 people well before 2030, it still needs more. Like the rest of Canada and many other parts of the world, there aren't enough people for the jobs that need to be done.

The province's low unemployment rate is 4.3 per cent—meaning Saskatchewan has a labour market on fire. In Regina alone, on just saskjobs.ca, there are over 4,500 job openings at any given time. Add that to the Government of Saskatchewan's prediction that the province will have 135,000 job openings by 2026, with nearly

half coming from economic growth and you've got a problem to solve. That's a lot of jobs to fill in a small amount of time—in a labour market that's never been tighter.

The people make the place

For EDR, Regina's growth has to start with people. And it's not just about the people that EDR wants to attract—it's also about the people that already call Regina home. Talent attraction takes more than just posting a job and hoping for the best. In today's competitive labour market, it's about showing people why they should choose Regina versus anywhere else.

EDR knows that Regina doesn't have the cosmopolitan hustle-and-bustle of a city of a million people. Nor will they compete with the multimillion dollar campaigns from other jurisdictions. For EDR, it's about Regina's value proposition, and turning the people already there into champions for the city they call home.

"EDR is excited to lead the charge when it comes to telling Regina's unique story, and we'll always wave that flag," says Lane. "But this isn't something that we—or anyone else—can do on our own. We need to work together, and we need to be smart."

EDR wants to show people everything Regina has to offer for those looking to put down roots and build a meaningful career without the frenetic pace and high cost of living found in a larger urban centre.

The Queen City difference

So, what does Regina offer that makes it a place to come home to? EDR says there's plenty.

First up, have you ever experienced rush hour on the 401 in Toronto? (The author of this article has and decided to give it yet another go last July. It was four thirty in the afternoon on Canada's busiest highway and we weren't going anywhere. I swore I would never complain about trains ever again.)

EDR affectionately calls Regina the home of the five-song commute and they really aren't kidding. Statistics Canada says Regina's commute is just 16 minutes. Compare that to Toronto's eye-watering 42 minutes.



On the business side of life

EDR also sees the opportunities that the city offers new and growing businesses looking to succeed. Situated in the centre of Canada's agricultural heartland, Regina is already known as an agricultural powerhouse. The crops that surround the city are a major economic driver that is fueling new growth. Canola seed, already a major export, has found new life as food oil, renewable fuel, animal feed and more—and is driving the construction of three canola crushing facilities and a renewable fuel project in the region.

Regina's agtech sector is heating up thanks to the new AGTECH ACCELERATOR, launched by Cultivator powered by Conexus Credit Union, EDR, and Conexus Venture Capital agtech fund, Emmertech. Thanks to Regina's location and status in agriculture, the city has never been better positioned to take advantage of its strengths.

Transport of goods is also a major factor at play due to the city's distinctive locale. With the TransCanada highway, two major railways, the Global Transportation Hub and Chuka Creek Business Park—plus the U.S. border less than three hours away and 270 million customers and multiple seaports within a two-day drive—Regina is ideally located for logistics, transportation and advanced manufacturing.



EDR CEO CHRIS LANE ADDRESSES REGINA'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY AT ITS FIRST HOMEGROWN SUCCESS: STATE OF LABOUR IN REGINA EVEN, HELD IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE REGINA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. PHOTO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGINA

Next up, home prices. Every day there is another story about the cost of housing in Canada becoming more and more unaffordable in many major metropolitan areas. On the whole, Regina's housing market is stable and budget-friendly, and according to EDR, that leaves more disposable income at the end of the month than almost any other city in Canada.

"Like any place, we know that Regina is not for everyone, and that's ok," Lane says. "Because for the right people, we offer an unbeatable quality of life with all the amenities of a larger city, a livelihood that leaves more money at the end of the month, and a city where people (and businesses) are closely connected—and that's a huge advantage.

"That story will be attractive to a lot of people. We just need to get out and share it."

Homegrown Regina

The saying often is that Regina, and Saskatchewan, is a great place to be from. While sometimes said in jest, there is also a grain of truth to it. Regina is a great place to be from. The city and its people have an exciting, powerful, authentic story

to tell, and sharing that story is a critical part of EDR's mission. Launched by EDR in 2022, and developed through extensive stakeholder consultation, Regina's Place Brand captures the things that make Regina a wonderful place to live, work and grow a business—and helps people tell that story.

"Regina has so much to offer people and businesses, whether it's a short commute or a place to grow a company. Our rolling canola fields, open skies, engaged entrepreneurs and friendly people make this a fantastic place to come home to," says Lane. "We need to show everyone just how special the Queen City is, and that we're ready to welcome everyone to this 'great place to be from'. It's time to grow home."



BE PART OF REGINA'S HOMEGROWN STORY.



A place for growers of all types

Whether you're looking to grow your career, build a business or raise a family, Regina is an ideal place to put down roots. We are home to one of Canada's fastest growing economies and lowest costs of living, yet small enough to cross town in five songs or less.

GROW YOUR WORLD
REGINA

GrowYourWorldRegina.com