

## Why Live In Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan is a large and marvelously diverse place. In addition to the wide open spaces that you typically see on calendars, there are forests, lakes, rivers – and even a few hills! Everywhere, however, the land has a compelling beauty and the sky is vast, yet somehow very close. As our license plates advertise, Saskatchewan is indeed the “Land of Living Skies.”

Opportunities for outdoor recreation abound in Saskatchewan. Here you can fish, boat, swim, hike, camp, canoe, bike, garden and even do some modest downhill skiing – just about anything you want, short of deep-sea diving and mountain climbing. The province has well developed minor sports programs for young people. Did you know there are more golf courses per capita in Saskatchewan than in any other province? And when it’s too cold to golf, you can always try your hand at curling.

Our geography is vast but we are connected by a well developed highway/all-weather road system. You are likely to develop a close bond with your vehicle! Many people find that travel provides a time for reflection or enjoying the remarkable landscape (the prairie seems empty only to those who do not live on it – prairie folk find it full of life and subtle changes).

Saskatchewan is well known for its agricultural production but we are also a resource-rich province. That means that, while the conversation in the coffee shops may be about the crops, many rural communities are just as dependent upon the forest, mining and petroleum industries for employment opportunities. Just as farmers are vulnerable to weather and commodity prices, so too these industries are affected by global markets and policy decisions. Ministry in Saskatchewan means an opportunity to walk with communities and to share in these hopes, joys, tensions and frustrations of your parishioners.

Saskatchewan is experiencing significant demographic shifts in its population. In some places there are more jobs than there are people to fill them (meaning your partner may be able to find employment) and/or there are newcomers looking to find a place in community; in others, there has been a gradual realignment caused by people moving from one small community to a larger one, frequently leaving the church as the only institutional symbol in the community. Witness how Saskatchewan people have loved our football team, the Roughriders, into a perpetual “team to beat”. So too will Saskatchewan people love the minister who helps them find meaning and perspective in the changing society around them.

Despite what you may remember from grade school geography classes, Saskatchewan is more than just wheat fields. Cultural opportunities abound, ranging from urban events like professional theatre, jazz festivals and rock concerts to small-town tours sponsored by the Saskatchewan Arts Council, to summer arts, theatre and music festivals. Many small communities hold an annual dinner theatre where new actors, prompters, set designers, etc. are always welcome. Our provincial library system has a complete on-line catalogue making resources from any area available to you with the click of a mouse. High-speed internet is the norm throughout the province.

Saskatchewan boasts two universities: the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, and the University of Regina in the capital city. Both universities, in cooperation with the Community College system, offer a wide variety of classes making a university degree a possibility no matter where you live. The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology offers applied arts and trades training, also cooperating with the Community colleges to make that training widely available across the province. St. Andrew’s College in Saskatoon offers theological education and a distance education program. Supervised Clinical Pastoral Education is available in Special Care Homes and Hospitals.

Located in the scenic Qu’Appelle Valley, Calling Lakes Centre (PCTC) is the United Church retreat and educational centre offering workshops, Life Long Learning events and personal or group retreats and home to the Designated Lay Ministry program. There are several other similar centres run by other faith-based communities within the province.

Of interest to ministers new to Saskatchewan , we are pleased to offer the annual September Newcomers event held at Calling Lakes Centre, when ministry personnel such as you (and your partner) gather to learn about life and ministry here and to begin forging new and lasting relationships. Every second year we offer a First Five Event which brings together people in their first five years of ministry to share experiences and build support networks with colleagues throughout the Conference. .

What people most often mention about this place, however, is our friendly, accepting and welcoming people. We have a progressive history and continue the hard work of creating gender justice and the acceptance of people with all sexual orientations. Justice for aboriginal peoples and healing from residential school abuses are priorities for Saskatchewan.

If you have any questions about life or ministry here, please do not hesitate to contact us. Or, if you wish to discuss your needs, wishes or dreams for ministry and how those things could be met in Saskatchewan, please call. It would be a privilege to help in any way we can. We ask that you prayerfully consider Saskatchewan Conference as a place to live out your ministry.

Blessings!

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