



Saskatchewan Association
of Rural Municipalities

SARM represents its membership of rural municipal government in Saskatchewan and is the principal advocate in representing them before all levels of senior government.

PRIORITIES | FALL 2023

THE CHALLENGE

In recent years, Saskatchewan RMs have faced plenty of challenges, many of which have been outside of their control. Economic instability created by numerous global and domestic events has increased inflationary pressure on RMs. Rapidly changing government policy has also created uncertainty and unease in all industries and sectors, from the agriculture, oil, and gas sectors to the forestry and mining sectors. Budgets are getting tighter; the labour market is getting smaller and more competitive. Everyone is trying to do more with less. No rural municipality, producer, or individual has been left unaffected.

THE OPPORTUNITY

SARM seeks to find ways to grow Saskatchewan's rural workforce, explore ideas that foster innovation, strengthen global food security, unite the country through infrastructure investment, and create consistent broadband uniformity. Providing rural municipalities with much-needed resources to ensure that Saskatchewan can continue to support Canada's economic growth and development, and lessen the socioeconomic burden that so many people are currently facing. The government should incentivize innovation and create policies that motivate positive change. Focus on unifying the country, rather than aiding in the divide of it. Working together will pay dividends for generations to come.

**Thank you for
your time. SARM
looks forward to
working with the
federal government
on projects
and initiatives
positively impacting
Saskatchewan's rural
municipalities.**

CHANGES + THE TOOLS NEEDED



Reliable broadband is necessary for RMs to maintain the health, safety, and economic well-being of those living in rural and remote areas. Dependable broadband has become essential to utilize technology in equipment and machinery; stay connected for work; provide educational opportunities; engage in social activities; and access healthcare.

According to the Federal Auditor, only 48.9% of Saskatchewan residents living in rural and remote areas have access to 50/10Mbps connection. Increased investment is needed to close gaps existing across the country.

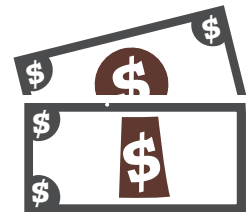


Ensure that municipalities can meet the challenges ahead when it comes to infrastructure investment, climate change and decreasing rural crime.



Despite significant technological advances, fossil fuels are still prevalent in producing food, energy, fertilizer, and other necessities worldwide. SARM certainly supports innovation and believes Saskatchewan producers are making efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide some of the best management practices for our natural resources; all solutions going forward must be balanced in their approach. Government decisions must be well-rounded in scientific facts, and the surrounding policy must remain uncompromising in creating food security, safeguarding against inequity, ensuring Canada remains competitive in a global market, and protecting the most vulnerable societies.

For that to happen, governments at all levels must roll up their sleeves, communicate and work together.



RMs are prudent financial planners, with limited resources. What they need from the federal government to weather current financial storms is sound government policy, that is practical and remains steady. Clarity and consistency need to be applied when it comes to federal funding to ensure that RMs can maximize every opportunity available. Funding frameworks need to be reviewed for rural Canada by applying a “rural lens”. This lens should recognize the fiscal limitations and sparse populations of rural communities, with the goal of increasing economic development and enhancing overall quality of life. The support provided need not be burdened by heavy amounts administrative of red tape and limitations around operational funding. Lastly, grants and subsidies need to be flexible and allow for municipal autonomy, not every jurisdiction is going to have the same set of needs in their community.