



Saskatchewan Association
of Rural Municipalities

Rural Integrated Roads for Growth (RIRG)

Saskatchewan, Canada, North America, and the world rely on well-maintained rural municipal roadways in the province to connect and seamlessly move a vast array of commodities to and from the global market.



Saskatchewan’s RMs are responsible for 162,000 km of Canada’s largest rural municipal road network. These roads require regular upkeep, maintenance at primary weights, and building and re-building. In addition, RMs are responsible for 1280 RM bridge structures. Approximately 60% of these rural bridges are at or beyond their expected service lifespan and need to be replaced to avoid safety hazards or disrupting the transportation of goods.

The Rural Integrated Roads for Growth (RIRG) program provides funding for RMs to support rural road construction, bridge construction, culvert installation, and for maintaining eligible roads at primary weights.

The funding for the RIRG program has been reduced over the years from ~\$25M in 2009 to 2014 to a mere \$15M from 2015 to 2023. The impact of this reduction had been offset in recent years by the presence of stimulus funding, which has now been fully depleted.

To begin to narrow the gap caused by historic funding decreases and massive inflation, SARM is seeking a commitment from the Ministry of Highways to build the program from 15M to 30M over the life of the RIRG Agreement.

Impacts of Inflation:

- From 2020 to 2023, public indexes showed general inflation increased between 15 and 28%.
- Clearing the Path has not changed its assistance rate of \$1000 per km (\$1200 for premium corridors) since 2007; it would require an increase of at least \$400 per km (~\$2.25 M) to come close to catching up to inflation.
- Inflation affected the Road Capital Program through the marked increase in the number of approved projects that were withdrawn. In 2018 and 2019, project withdraws were between 0 and 10% respectively, but in 2020 to 2022 the project withdraw rate was 29%, 25%, and 47% respectively.
- For the Bridge and Large Diameter Culvert Program, inflation increased the cost per square meter of bridge construction by 36% between 2010 and 2020, and those costs increased an additional 25% between 2020 and 2022.

Without adequate funding for the RIRG program rural transportation infrastructure will continue to deteriorate at an increasing rate. This will pose great risks to the province’s economy, public safety, and industry investment.

An underfunded RIRG program also poses reputational risk to SARM, which absorbs many criticisms of the program resulting from limited funding. This undermines RMs’ trust in SARM to deliver the advocacy and services they need.