

Opportunities for Rural Growth & Development

Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities



The Opportunities

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 RMs 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.

The Challenges

In recent years, Saskatchewan's rural municipalities (RMs) have faced numerous challenges, many beyond their control. Economic instability fueled by global and domestic events has increased inflationary pressures on RMs.

Supply chain disruptions, including port and railway strikes, have further exacerbated difficulties in moving goods to market, particularly agricultural products vital to Saskatchewan's economy. With rural Saskatchewan dependent on efficient transportation networks, these disruptions have created bottlenecks, raising costs and reducing the reliability of exporting commodities.

The labour market has also become a critical issue, with a smaller, more competitive workforce affecting everything from infrastructure projects to agricultural production. In tandem, rapidly changing government policies have created uncertainty across industries, including agriculture, oil, gas, forestry, and mining. As costs rise and labour becomes scarcer, rural communities are being asked to do more with less. No RM, producer, or individual has been left unaffected.

The Voice of Rural Saskatchewan

Advocacy Asks



BROADBAND

Reliable broadband and cellular coverage are vital for the health, safety, and prosperity of RMs, facilitating effective communication during emergencies, supporting modern agriculture, and enabling remote work. These connections are essential for accessing education, health care services like telemedicine, and fostering social connections. As rural areas increasingly rely on digital technologies, stable internet and cellular signals are crucial for optimizing production, participating in the workforce, and enhancing overall quality of life. Current federal funding models, are heavily based on population density. This fails to address prairie-specific challenges like vast rural areas and remote Indigenous communities. Funding limitations stifle the province's ability to contribute fully to national growth.

INNOVATION & CARBON REDUCTION

Despite significant technological advances, combustion engines are still prevalent in producing food, energy, fertilizer and other necessities. 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.

FUNDING FRAMEWORKS

SARM urges the federal government to reform its predominantly population-based funding models, which unintentionally disadvantage RMs and leave them competing with larger urban centers while failing to acknowledge their critical contributions to Canada's economy. A more tailored, flexible approach is required—one that factors in regional economic output, as well as population and other geographical and economic limitations—to help unlock the full potential of RMs.

Funding frameworks need to address the many challenges faced by rural communities, prioritizing economic contributions over population size and include provisions for operational funding. Ignoring the need for operational funding jeopardizes the long-term viability of vital services and infrastructure in RMs. Furthermore, reducing red tape in the funding application process is crucial to assist RM administrators achieve greater success in completing an often-lengthy application process. By streamlining funding applications and expanding the scope of project funding, the federal government can empower RMs to enhance local infrastructure, stimulate economic growth, and improve the quality of life for rural Canadians.

**Thank you
for your time!**

SARM looks forward to working with the federal government on projects and initiatives positively impacting Saskatchewan's rural municipalities.