

Municipal Road Strategy

Background

The Ministry has been in discussion with SARM about a new framework for municipal road programs; in the 2009-10 budget year, the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure will take a more integrated and strategic approach.

Previously the province had invested \$20 M in four different programs:

- Municipal Resources Program
- Heavy Haul Roads Program
- Municipal Bridge Program
- Clearing the Path – Primary Weight Corridors Program

These programs existed separately and were administered by both the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, and the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure.

Up until now, programs had been ad hoc, with overlapping priorities, and region and industry specific in nature. (The exception to this is Clearing the Path, where the Ministry has worked closely with SARM to integrate purpose in support of shared economic development initiatives.)

In the 2009-10 budget year all of these programs will be moved under the administration of the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure.

The Province is committed to a more strategic and integrated approach – a new Municipal Road Strategy – that supports the following objectives:

- Better alignment of the provincial highway network and municipal road network
- An integration of the transportation system that is focused not only municipal, provincial and federal jurisdictions but rather on the efficient movement of goods across the province.
- Efficient and seamless transportation connections to enhance the competitiveness of rural industries by providing better access to local, national and international markets.
- Support for economic growth in rural Saskatchewan as part of the continued growth and sustainability of the provincial economy.

The Municipal Road Strategy will receive significantly more funding in the upcoming budget.

The Ministry will work closely and collaboratively with municipalities to direct investments, but municipalities will also have the responsibility to ensure investments are targeted and strategic.

- It is proposed that the HH/HV program be melded with the MRR program into one new targeted program.
- We propose the establishment of a joint MHI-SARM advisory committee to oversee this program.
- The committee's roles will be to recommend program details, prioritize investments as developed by a technical committee and propose allocation of the increased funding in 3rd party rural municipal capital among the various programs.
- In return for more authority and increased provincial funds, municipalities need to demonstrate that they are making strategic investments.
- Municipal road projects need to identify a clear "return on investment" – roads that are crucial to the efficient function of existing industries and that will attract new investment.