

# Annual Convention Proceedings

March 6-9, 2006  
Conexus Arts Centre, Regina

## Attendance Statistics

Reeves & Councillors	981
Administrators	228
Other Visitors	672
Total	1,881
Municipalities Represented:	291

## Tuesday, March 7, 2006

### 10:00 a.m.

President Neal Hardy called the convention to order. "O Canada" was sung and the invocation was given by Father Ken Miller.

President Hardy called upon Director Debra Gronning to pay the piper.

The Honourable Dr. Lynda Haverstock, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, then gave the opening address. This was followed by the presentation of the Lieutenant Governor's Award, sponsored by SaskPower, to William Welter, from the RM of Viscount No. 341.

Councillor Vic McDougall of the City of Regina then gave an address of welcome. Vice-President David Marit gave the reply to the guest speakers. President Hardy introduced the fraternal delegates and the SARM Board of Directors.

The adoption of the agenda was followed by announcements by Executive Director Ken Engel. President Hardy delivered his opening address to the delegates and others present. The address is printed below in its entirety.

### *President's Address*

Good morning reeves, councillors, administrators, fraternal delegates, and visitors! Welcome to the 2006 SARM Annual Convention. Our one-hundred and first convention!

This is promising to be another interesting convention. I would like to thank the SARM Board, the RMAA, the partners and staff who organized the Partners' Program, the SARM staff for organizing the convention, and Municipal Hail for helping staff the registration desk and sponsoring the reception last night. And I would like to again thank all RMs for again joining SARM.

## Protecting Our Water - Together

The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority wishes to express its appreciation to members of the numerous Rural Municipalities who assisted in the completion of the Lower Souris River Watershed, Moose Jaw River Watershed, Assiniboine River Watershed and Yorkton Area Aquifers Source Water Protection Plans.

Progress continues to be made on three more source water protection plans, which are scheduled for completion in 2007. We look forward to continuing to work with local governments to implement these plans and to ensure a safe and secure water supply for all our residents.

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### Education Tax

There are a number of things I want to talk about today, but I want to start by talking about education tax.

For many years SARM was the major voice lobbying the province for education tax relief on agricultural property. With the 1997 reassessment, agricultural land assessment took the largest increase when compared with other properties. Then it increased again in 2001 and 2005.

We have been the highest taxed agriculture land for education tax in Canada. Compare us to Manitoba where they use the same assessment procedures but the percentage of value is 26.5 per cent on agriculture land. Here, ours is 55 per cent. Then Manitoba refunds 50 per cent of the education tax collected on agriculture land. Compare that to Saskatchewan's 30 per cent rebate on farmland plus the 8 per cent rebate! Buildings are assessed in Manitoba, but they get a homeowner grant of \$460.

In August 2005, we formed the education tax coalition to apply pressure on the province to get serious about education tax relief on all properties. Coalition members include SARM, SUMA, SSBA, PARCS, the Chamber of Commerce and the Real Estate Association. These organizations represent all the taxing authorities and businesses.

Our request was to reduce to 50 per cent the property share of education tax in the 2006 budget, 45 per cent in 2007, and 40 per cent in 2008.

Then about half the RMs started withholding the portion of education tax on farmland. This put additional pressure on the Province to act.

We've had many meetings with RM councils in recent months. Vice-President Dave Marit, Director Ray Orb and I met with about 15 RMs at Baildon, then I met with the West Central Municipal Association at Luseland and Director Jim Hallick and I met with the North East Municipal Association at Archerwill. And directors have had other meetings with councils.

In January, the Education Tax Coalition met with Minister Taylor and Minister Thomson, who were then responsible for Government Relations and Learning, to discuss the various ways that education tax could be reduced on properties.

Then on January 30, Dave and I met with the Premier in Saskatoon to again discuss the farming situation, but mostly focussing on what the province could do to solve the education tax issue.

Later at the SUMA convention the first week of February, we again discussed with the Premier and some cabinet members this issue. We also discussed with our new minister Van Mulligen the importance of dealing with the education tax issue. During this time, I have had the opportunity to talk by phone several times with the Premier about how we could deal with the education tax issue.

On March 3, the Premier announced a further 30 per cent reduction for education tax on farmland.

This announcement is a positive step forward in dealing with this issue. A move has been made to address the unfairness, plus there is the 8 per cent rebate for all taxpayers. Now we must continue to work with the provincial government on reducing education tax on all properties. As the Premier stated last Friday, this is a permanent plan and he will have in place in 2007, his long-term plan.

### **Lobbying**

Because we deal with many issues with the government we need to put pressure on but keep the doors open for all the other areas we work on.

For example we work on:

Legislation: such as The Planning and Development Act changes and the new Municipal Act. Economic development issues: such as Clearing the Path, involving many departments. And policy: like the BSE Advisory Committee, the new provincial government farm group Farm Leaders Advisory Group, the Farm Support Review Committee, SAMA, and Rural Revenue Sharing.

In regards to Rural Revenue Sharing, \$4 million added for 2005-06 announced at the SUMA convention and the same for this year, bringing revenue sharing up to \$38 million, and \$32 million for capital infrastructure for Saskatchewan on a per capita basis.

We also work on federal and provincial capital projects such as: the Prairie Grain Roads Program, Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund, Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program, and Water legislation and regulations

We also work with the federal government on many issues such as: legislation, ALUS, Set-aside, Carbon credits, CAIS, Western Diversification, Species at Risk, Canadian Grain Commission proposed changes (example: falling number technology), BSE crisis and the funding that came with it, funding for farmers of grains and oilseeds, Fisheries and Oceans, Navigable Waters Act - RM of Insinger, and the New Deal. Under the New Deal, shortlines were included, funding can be used for roads, do not need a sustainability plan, there will be a workshop on the New Deal on Wednesday afternoon, Own-use import permits for glyphosate and Ivermectin.

### **Agriculture**

It's not news to anyone here that agriculture today is in a crisis situation. Farm incomes are low, commodity prices are low, and input prices are high.

Recently SARM sent a survey to your RM offices asking about the financial condition of farmers in your area. We had a very good response to the survey, and I would like to thank you for taking the time to complete it and send it in.

We had 210 responses to the survey. Results of the survey show that 93 per cent of respondents rated the farmers in their area as being in very bad financial shape. When we asked the same question 14 months ago, 82 per cent of responding RMs rated financial situation as severe. That's a 13 per cent increase in 14 months.

Other survey results indicate that: 65 per cent said that there would be an increase in the amount of land for sale in their RMs; it appears that across the province, there will be an increase in the amount of land that goes unrented this spring; and the survey also shows that there will likely be a significant amount of land that goes unseeded this year, particularly in the south east.

Results will be sent to your RM office when the analysis is complete. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's farm income forecast shows Saskatchewan with a loss of \$203 million for 2006. Our grains and oilseeds is expected to bring \$3.4 billion; cattle \$1.7 billion; program payments \$1.1 billion for a total of \$6.1 billion, while our total expenses \$5.4 billion.

The severity of the situation requires that farm organizations speak with a united voice. We have been working with APAS, and we would welcome any farm groups that want to work with us on this issue.

### **Municipal Issues**

In addition to education tax and agriculture policy, SARM is active on many other fronts. This is the organization that represents the rural roots of Saskatchewan, so it is very important that we are involved on all issues that are important to our members.

### **SARM Services**

SARM provides services that help municipalities control their costs. We offer services like our trading department and insurance programs such as a self-insured liability and property insurance that help keep your costs down. I am pleased to say that our property and liability self-insurance programs have had another good year. We are seeing an increase in the number of public buildings such as community halls and skating rinks being insured under these programs. In order to ensure that these buildings are well maintained and safe for public use, we are looking at implementing a building inspection program over the next year. More information will be available on this matter at the June District Meetings.

Through our Group Benefits plan, SARM members can take advantage of excellent rates for these services. Our in-house legal services, that SARM uses for its liability insurance program, help keeps the Association's costs down, which we can then pass on to you in terms of keeping membership fees down. Our legal staff also spend a considerable amount of time on RM requests, providing members with an affordable alternative.

The bulk purchasing power through Trading Department and PPBG offer savings opportunities for your municipality. The Trading Department continues to grow. Your Trading Department will continue to work on your behalf to get you the best possible rates.

**The SARM Board**

In order to maintain a broad perspective on rural issues, each SARM Board member sits on 10 to 15 committees.

SARM meets regularly with cabinet ministers and senior departmental officials. One of the ways we do this is through the provincial Municipal forum. SUMA, and SARM, meet four times per year to discuss important local government issues such as economic development, revenue sharing, proposed legislation, and Clearing the Path.

We also meet with ministers and government officials as issues arise. Recently the Department of Government Relations has made statements regarding the capitalization of infrastructure

assets that concern SARM. SARM has made the point to them that this would greatly add to the administrative burden of a RM without any added benefit. We will continue to push this point with them.

**Lobbyist**

At the federal level, we have a lobbyist in Ottawa. They have access that allows SARM to see new proposed legislation and have an impact before it reaches the minister level. They also open doors to ministers so we can put forward our ideas on different issues such as BSE payment, Grains and oilseeds payments that have come out, and CAIS changes that are needed

With the assistance of Hill and Knowlton, we have established a presence in Ottawa. We have representatives from Hill and Knowlton here today – Ian Faris and Andy Gibbons.

They deal with federal legislation of concern to rural Saskatchewan. They work for us on issues such as Agriculture, Species at Risk compensation regulations, strychnine, Transport Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

We have been working with them on the *Navigable Waters Act* for quite some time. As you know, this is one of the pieces of legislation that has caused problems for RMs when trying to build roads. Recently, we received good news that Transport Canada officials are coming to their senses when applying the *Navigable Waters Act* in Saskatchewan. The RM of Insinger had a road project being held up because Transport officials were trying to make them put in a culvert that was big enough to allow a canoe with passengers to pass through it. It would have cost the RM \$275,000 more to meet this demand. It made no sense at all. We had help from Hill and Knowlton and a meeting with two officials on this issue and I am happy to say we have finally got the situation resolved.


With a new federal government in place, Hill and Knowlton will play an important role in helping SARM build relationships with the new Cabinet and key staff. They have consultants who are very close to the new government.

SARM also sits on the Federation of Canadian Municipalities National Board of Directors. Here, we are able to bring rural Saskatchewan issues to a national table. FCM President Gloria Kovach will be here later today to give a report.


**Legislation**

Another main role SARM fills is to ensure that federal and provincial legislation and programs work for rural Saskatchewan.

For example, SARM, along with SUMA, worked hard to get a "Made in Saskatchewan" solution for the New Deal for Cities and Communities. We were able to get shortline railways included as eligible projects. And Saskatchewan is one of the only provinces that doesn't require municipalities to prepare a



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sustainability plan in the application process. Also the money can be spent on roads.

It is important to work with government on legislation when it is changed. When the new Municipal Act was under development, SARM did a lot of work on it and we got what we wanted out of it. We are now working with Government Relations on the Planning and Development Act Review. SARM has two members on that Committee. Our objective is to streamline the Act while preserving local autonomy.

#### **PGRP**

This is the last year for the Prairie Grain Roads Program. The PGRP has been an important source of funds for building a road network. We are working with the PFRA and the Department of Highways to lobby the federal government for an extension of the PGRP. A study done by UMA estimated that it will take \$485 million to complete the grain corridor system in Saskatchewan.

SARM has representatives on the Prairie Grain Roads Program management committee. We also have members on the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund, Canada Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program, and New Deal committees. Through these positions, SARM gives a voice to rural issues and makes sure rural concerns get addressed.

On the agriculture side, in the last year we've secured a position on the National CAIS Committee, the Provincial CAIS appeals committee, and a working group of the National Forum on Seed, which is the successor of the Seed Sector Review. During the BSE crisis, we were a member of the provincial Advisory Committee and have named two board members to the new Farm Leaders Advisory Group.

#### **Clearing the Path**

SARM also believes it is important to take a proactive approach to strengthening rural Saskatchewan.

We started the Clearing the Path initiative to remove impediments to economic development in rural Saskatchewan. We have expanded this effort so that we are now working with SUMA to make sure our urban neighbours are included as we move forward with implementing the recommendations that were endorsed by you one year ago.

The Clearing the Path subcommittees have continued their work throughout the past year. The Transportation Committee and the Department of Highways are currently working on a primary weight corridor system that will allow businesses in rural Saskatchewan to get their products to market. There is a draft of the corridor system for you to look at in the coffee room. I want to emphasize that this is just a draft and will change, but have a look at it and see if it makes sense.

# **SAMA**

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The Development Committee has put together a series of workshops to guide you through the process that would take place when implementing the recommendations from the Clearing the Path report. For example, what does sector specific planning mean? How can you work with neighbouring municipalities? What kinds of development make sense in your area? What resources are available to help you through the process of streamlining bylaws?

Information about dates and locations has been sent to reeves and to your RM office, and registration forms are on the orange paper in your convention kits. If you haven't registered yet, please make sure and do so.

The strength of Clearing the Path is that it allows you to decide what is best for your area. It is locally driven, not top down. We believe rural Saskatchewan has great potential and that is why we are so enthused about Clearing the Path.

More will be said about the road corridors and workshops in our Clearing the Path session on Thursday morning. But I want to repeat that it is important that council attend these workshops. They will help you determine the future of your community, and not let its future be determined by someone else.

#### **Nuclear Forum**

In January, SARM, SUMA and the University of Regina held a forum on Saskatchewan's nuclear future. Saskatchewan has uranium that we mine out of the ground. We have had resolutions on nuclear power, and there is a growing interest in the nuclear industry. We held this forum, not because we are experts on the nuclear industry. Quite the opposite. We saw a need for a public discussion forum so that people could discuss information based on the facts, not fear. The feedback from the forum has been very positive. I would like to thank the reeves, councillors and administrators who took the time to come out to the event.

#### **Noxious Weeds**

Many of you know Dr. Garry Bowes. Since 1999, Garry has been the coordinator for the noxious weed program. Garry has worked diligently to promote awareness and control options for noxious weeds such as leafy spurge and scentless chamomile. Garry is retiring this year. On behalf of SARM, I would like to ask Garry to come up so we can make a presentation to show our appreciation. Garry, I would like to thank you for all your work, and to wish you all the best in retirement.

#### **Conclusion**

As you know, this marks my last convention as SARM President. I would like to say thank you to my council for their support over the last ten years. For looking after the day to day problems. To the SARM Board of Directors, thank you for doing an excellent job, you were always willing to take on new responsibilities. To the RMAA board have had the pleasure of sitting on the board as ex-officio director for the last four years. A relationship that few, if any, employee - employers have in this country. To the

SARM staff, thank you for the professionalism over the last ten years working for the board and rural municipalities. To each and every one of the administrators, councillors and reeves, thank you for your support. It has truly been an honour and a privilege to serve you. God bless you and have a good convention.

#### **11:45 a.m.**

The convention recessed for lunch.

#### **1:15 p.m.**

Tim Leurer, RMAA Director for Division 4, presented trophies to the winners of the RMAA's Provincial Curling playdowns.

#### **1:30 p.m.**

Gloria Kovach, President, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, gave a report on behalf of FCM.

#### **1:45 p.m.**

Louie Hradecki, Chair of the Saskatchewan Council on Community Development, introduced the keynote speaker Rob Greenwood, who addressed the delegates.

#### **3:15 p.m.**

Honourable Harry Van Mulligen, Minister of Government Relations, addressed the delegates.

#### **4:00 p.m.**

Jennifer Bisson gave a presentation on the new Canada-Saskatchewan Historic Places Initiative.

#### **4:30 p.m.**

Brad Wall, Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, addressed the delegates.

#### **5:00 p.m.**

The convention was recessed to reconvene at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 8.

## **Wednesday, March 8, 2006**

#### **9:00 a.m.**

President Hardy called the convention to order.

Resolutions 1-06A through 7-06A were debated.

#### **9:45 a.m.**

The Premier of Saskatchewan, Honourable Lorne Calvert, addressed the convention.

#### **10:35 a.m.**

The 20th Annual Bear Pit Session with the provincial cabinet took place.

#### **12:00 p.m.**

The convention was recessed for lunch.

**1:00 p.m.**

Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, addressed the delegates.

**1:45 p.m.**

Four concurrent workshops ran from 1:45 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. and then again from 3:15 to 4:30 p.m. Workshops topics were:

The New Deal – Infrastructure Investment Plan; Building a Dream! (Ogema Economic Development); Ethanol – A Macro Opportunity; and “Hamlet” – Planning for Change – a Humorous Look at Municipal Planning.

**4:30 p.m.**

The convention recessed for the day to reconvene at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 9.

## Thursday, March 9, 2006

**8:30 a.m.**

President Hardy called the convention to order and introduced Ken McBride, President of the Agricultural Producers of Saskatchewan, who addressed the delegates.

**8:45 a.m.**

Executive Director Ken Engel presented the financial statements of the association for 2005.

**9:00 a.m.**

Certificate presentations were made to graduates of the Municipal Leadership Development Program.

**9:15 a.m.**

Dr. Jim Dosman, Institute of Agricultural, Rural and Environmental Health, reported on the Agricultural Health and Safety Network. As well, Brenna Dureault of the RM of Wolseley No. 155, was presented with the 11th annual SARM 90th Anniversary Student Essay Award.

**9:30 a.m.**

An election was held for President, with David Marit, Glenn Blakley and David Rogers being nominated. A vote was held and David Marit was declared elected by Kevin Ritchie, Returning Officer.

**10:00 a.m.**

A presentation was made on the next phase of the Clearing the Path, by Richard Porter, Chair of the Transportation Subcommittee and Les Potter, Chair of the Development Subcommittee.

Nominations for Vice President were accepted. Jim Hallick was declared elected by acclamation by Kevin Ritchie, Returning Officer.

**10:45 a.m.**

A presentation was made on the “Safe Saskatchewan” program, by Gord Moker, Program Coordinator.

**11:15 a.m.**

Resolutions 8-06A through 12-06A were debated.

**11:45 a.m.**

The convention recessed for lunch.

**1:00 p.m.**

Wayne Black, President, Saskatchewan Municipal Hail Association, gave a report on the association.

**1:10 p.m.**

Kevin Ritchie, President of the Rural Municipal Administrators Association addressed the delegates.

**1:30 p.m.**

Resolution 13-06A through 24-06A were debated.

Neal Hardy was presented with a clock in appreciation of his service to SARM and the rural municipalities of Saskatchewan, by incoming president, David Marit.

**2:00 p.m.**

Individual meetings for each division were held. An election was held in Division 1 between Don Taylor and Glenn Blakley, with Don Taylor being successful. Doug Steele was elected, by acclamation in Division 3 and Murray Purcell, by acclamation in Division 5. As there were no nominations from the main floor for Director for Division 4 nominations were accepted at the Division Meeting. Harvey Malanowich was elected Director.

**3:15 p.m.**

Point of Privilege Resolutions 1 to 6 were debated.

*The convention was then adjourned.*