

Physical Infrastructure



Culverts and Connectivity: Keeping Saskatchewan's Highways Moving



Saskatchewan's highways support much more than travel. They help connect families to essential services, keep goods moving to communities and global markets and provide steady routes for emergency responders. To protect these lifelines, the Ministry of Highways is strengthening road systems so they can better handle flooding, erosion and other effects of environmental variability.

A major part of this work focuses on improving how water flows around and under the highway network. When culverts fail or become overwhelmed, roads can wash out quickly, cutting off communities and creating serious safety concerns. To reduce these risks, the province has been increasing the number of culverts on the National Highway System that meet higher standards, including a minimum diameter of 800 millimetres and the ability to manage a 1:50-year return period flow.

In 2024-25, 62 culverts met these enhanced criteria, including 50 upgrades on the National Highway System. In areas that face frequent flooding or have only one access route into a community, drainage structures were designed to withstand even greater pressures, meeting a 1:100-year return period standard. Twelve culverts with this higher level of protection were installed in those areas during 2024-25. These improvements support safer, more reliable travel in some of Saskatchewan's most vulnerable regions.

Road failures often stem from aging culverts made from galvanized corrugated steel or older timber structures, such as wood box culverts. As part of long-term planning, the ministry is increasingly considering materials with longer service lives, lowering maintenance needs over time. Replacing timber bridges also reduces vulnerability, since modern materials are more durable and not at risk of fire. Updated abutment wall depths help prevent washouts and protect approaches during flooding. In 2024-25, 10 timber bridges and five structures with timber abutments were replaced.

Together, these targeted upgrades strengthen the transportation network by improving drainage performance, reducing erosion risks and supporting dependable access in both everyday travel and emergency situations.

In 2024-25, 62 culverts were upgraded to meet higher resilience standards.

Why It Matters

Reliable highways are essential to the well-being of Saskatchewan residents. Stronger culverts and modern bridge designs help keep communities connected during floods, reduce safety risks, support stable access to health care, schools, workplaces and emergency services and keep the economy moving. By investing in long-lasting materials and designs that perform well under environmental variability, the province is protecting its transportation network, reducing future disruptions and supporting the economic and social stability of communities across Saskatchewan.

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