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Rural Municipality of Mckillop No. 220  
Box 220  
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Bulyea, Saskatchewan S0G 0L0

Attention Reeve and Councillors:

I don't need to tell you how different and difficult this year has been for everyone. COVID-19 turned all our lives upside down, and no individual, business, or industry was spared.

Agriculture was no exception. But unlike so many other industries, there was no slowdown. If anything, the work of Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers only increased. When grocery shelves were empty earlier this year, people across Canada got a better understanding of just how important agricultural producers are. And when rural kids were forced to learn from home, the damage caused by unreliable rural internet and cellular coverage became crystal clear.

We at APAS, just like everyone else in agriculture, found ourselves busier than ever this year, working hard on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers to improve their lives and businesses. While we had to adapt, we've been just as effective at advocating for this province's producers. Here are some highlights:

### **Fixing bad rural internet and cellular coverage**

APAS has been working on the issue of bad rural connectivity since 2019, but when COVID-19 exposed Saskatchewan's terrible rural internet service, we knew more had to be done.

That's why we launched the APAS Rural Connectivity Task Force. Since September, the Task Force has met with industry experts, service providers, and regulators to understand why internet and cellular coverage is still so bad in rural Saskatchewan, and identify ways to fix the problem.

The Rural Connectivity Task Force just released a summary (enclosed) of what it's learned so far. Once their research is complete, the Task Force will release its recommendations as part of a final report in early 2021. We'll use those recommendations to build support and advocate for change so that real improvements will happen.

APAS also created an Internet Speed Test for Saskatchewan. It's a fast and easy way to calculate your internet speed, and it will give us a better understanding of service levels across the province. We're promoting the Internet Speed Test province-wide, with nearly 21,000 tests completed so far. Take the Internet Speed Test at [apas.ca/speedtest](https://apas.ca/speedtest) and get more information about the Task Force at [apas.ca/connectivity](https://apas.ca/connectivity).

### **Improving business risk management programs**



With the shutdowns of livestock processing facilities this spring, and the trade disruptions last year, we've seen how important it is for farmers and ranchers to have business risk management programs that actually work to protect the incomes of producers in uncontrollable situations. APAS presented multiple times to the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food this year to share the concerns of Saskatchewan producers with decision-makers in Ottawa.

APAS has also been working closely with our provincial counterparts and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) to advocate for improvements to business risk management programs. These efforts led to the federal government's recent proposal to remove AgriStability's reference margin limit and increase payment levels from 70% to 80%.

### **Important APAS issues and activities for 2021**

Our six APAS Policy Committees are currently planning their activities for next year, but here are some of the top priorities they've identified for 2021:

- Creation of the next Agricultural Policy Framework in 2023.
- Carbon tax exemptions on grain drying, barn heating, and other farm activities.
- Seed royalty models and value creation.
- Improving grain contracts.
- Enacting provincial trespass legislation.
- Greater transparency on railway performance and costing.
- Canada Grain Act and Canadian Grain Commission reviews.
- Provincial inactive orphan well program.
- Surface rights protections.
- Consultations on "fake meat" labelling.
- Intergenerational transfers and access to capital.
- Young farmer tax incentives.
- On-farm natural gas infrastructure and three-phase power networks.
- "Right to repair" and access to affordable machinery parts.
- Farm labour recruitment and retention.
- Livestock price insurance premiums and set-aside program.
- Provincial meat inspection and processing capacity.
- Drought and water management for the livestock sector.

It's important for you to stay informed about how we're working on your behalf, so please contact Curtis Hemming, our Assistant General Manager, at [306.789.7774](tel:306.789.7774) or [chemming@apas.ca](mailto:chemming@apas.ca) to request more information on our projects, or to schedule an update meeting.

On behalf of the APAS Board, Representatives, and staff, I wish you a safe and happy holiday season, and all the best in 2021.

Sincerely,



Todd Lewis  
President, APAS Board of Directors