



Minister Responsible  
for SaskTel

Legislative Building  
Regina SK S4S 0B3

March 9, 2017

2017-0103-0816

Chad MacPherson, General Manager  
Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association  
PO Box 4752  
Regina SK S4P 3Y4

  
Dear Mr. MacPherson:

Thank you for your organization's letter concerning the availability of high speed Internet in rural communities that was sent to the office of the Honourable Lyle Stewart, Minister of Agriculture. He has forwarded your letter to me and, as Minister Responsible for SaskTel, I am pleased to respond.

SaskTel understands the importance of providing communications services in rural areas. However, SaskTel faces a unique challenge in providing these services to one of the most geographically dispersed populations in the country. As Saskatchewan has the fewest customers per square kilometer of any Canadian province, SaskTel incurs significant costs to deliver services to rural locations.

SaskTel reaches over 99 percent of the population of Saskatchewan with Internet services through a combination of DSL (Digital Subscriber Line), Fusion interNET fixed location wireless and Mobile Internet wireless technologies, each of which maintain their own sets of limitations and bear different costs for installation and maintenance.

For instance, DSL Internet is a distance sensitive technology. As a result, SaskTel is only able to provide Basic High Speed Internet service to a maximum distance of 4 km from the nearest central distribution office. It should be noted that in this case, distance is not measured "as the crow flies"; rather, it is calculated as the length the cable travels as it loops from the distribution point to individual customers.

SaskTel Fusion interNET fixed location wireless service has a greater range than DSL, but is limited to line of sight with the provisioned tower. Similarly, SaskTel 4G and 4G LTE Mobile Internet services provide Internet connectivity through MiFi sticks, smartphones or other Internet enabled wireless capable devices through SaskTel's 4G and 4G LTE wireless networks. With a maximum 38 km radius, wireless services have an excellent footprint, but they can be affected by weather and geographical or man-made obstructions.

I recognize that your organization is concerned about the availability of Internet services in rural Saskatchewan. However, I must point out that SaskTel has done a great deal of work bringing affordable and reliable Internet service to rural locations over the past number of years.



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SaskTel has invested heavily to introduce and upgrade wireline services in a number of communities. As of today, SaskTel offers DSL high speed Internet in 431 communities with the majority of those communities having access to speeds of 10 Mbps or faster. More recently, SaskTel announced on February 28 that they would be expanding DSL service to 15 more communities across rural Saskatchewan in 2017/2018.

In addition, SaskTel has continued to invest in its wireless Internet infrastructure. In terms of Mobile Internet, SaskTel is committed to providing LTE coverage to 99 percent of this province's population by the end of 2017. As a recent example of their progress toward fulfilling this commitment, on February 21, SaskTel announced that they had completed work upgrading 96 rural towers to the new LTE standard.

SaskTel's Fusion InterNET wireless fixed location Internet service is now capable of delivering speeds of up to 10 Mbps download and 2 Mbps upload. Similar to the growth of SaskTel's Mobile Internet service, Fusion interNET now has a wide reach across rural Saskatchewan. Today, the service provides high speed Internet services in 714 communities across Saskatchewan

I would like to assure your members that SaskTel is continually working to responsibly and sustainably expand services. And as such, they are constantly evaluating possible projects to determine areas where expanding their services is economically feasible.

However, I would like to inform your membership that for many rural communities that are not currently part of SaskTel's service expansion or upgrade plans, they may be able to take advantage of SaskTel's Community Participation Program.

The program is designed for Saskatchewan Communities that do not have service or currently have inadequate levels of service in their area, but also fail to meet SaskTel's criteria for expansion.

The program allows customers or communities to pay a portion or all of the required capital costs as determined by SaskTel on a case-by-case basis. If your members and their communities would be interested in investigating this option, please let them know they can contact Bill Beckman, Senior Director – Regulatory affairs, at 306-777-4208.

Thank you for taking the time to share your concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dustin Duncan".

Honourable Dustin Duncan  
Minister Responsible for SaskTel

cc: Honourable Lyle Stewart, Minister of Agriculture  
Ron Styles, SaskTel President and Chief Executive Officer  
Bill Beckman, SaskTel Senior Director – Regulatory Affairs