

**Where will you use
your next
Saskatchewan hunting
license?**

During muzzleloader season in west-central Saskatchewan, two gates were peeled back and tire tracks went through. By the time the open gates were discovered, co-op pasture cattle had gone into the canola field. This triggered a crop insurance claim, payment of a deductible and an uptick in the premium.



In the middle of harvest, the husband needed to make a parts run, left the car with keys in the field where his wife was combining, and took the truck she had used. Someone stole the car.

These are real and terrible stories. The situation is made worse from rural depopulation and a closure of services needed to combat crime and misdemeanors. The Saskatchewan Government's solution is opposite to what sociologists, criminologists and the law profession suggest. Recently the Ministry of Environment eliminated 19 front counter service staff. What's worse, the Minister of Justice has introduced draconian changes to the Trespass and related acts, awaiting third reading and implementation in 2019. This knee-jerk response hurts the wrong people, us! It amounts to blaming the victims.

If the proposals pass into law, those of us who travel in rural areas enjoying the scenery will be bound by provincial law to stay on the roads and road allowances. It means that unless we are travelling through a provincial forest, vacant crown land or a provincial park we will not be able to stop to hunt, fish, exercise a dog, stretch our legs or otherwise wander off the road allowance even just to sniff the fragrance of a wild flower without permission.

The Government is looking toward some kind of landowner access app; to do what? Obtaining permission site by site is difficult if not unworkable. Land ownership and leasehold change so frequently that maps produced by Rural Municipalities are quickly out of date. Due to privacy concerns, telephone numbers are not given out. Cell phones are in common use and numbers are not available via an internet search or telephone book. In many cases, land ownership is attributed to numbered companies and these can be located outside of Saskatchewan. With the proposed changes, the Saskatchewan Government is needlessly placing random private will and logistics ahead of citizens' rights to participate in our natural and heritage Commons.

This legislation is not necessary nor will it reduce rural crime. It will not deter those people who are willing to threaten others, willing to break into and steal items from rural or urban premises. Those bad apples are already intent on committing criminal offences and any threat of a trespassing violation will be of no consequence to them; they don't think they'll be caught. If this legislation passes it will place a huge new workload on law enforcement and police personnel who are already over-burdened and understaffed. There are already provincial laws which regulate littering, all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, hunting, trapping and fishing on private land. Some of these activities are already very heavily regulated. Landowners already have viable options to restrict activities on their land. However, the proposed Trespass Act and associated amendments go too far and will make violators out of those people who are now legally on the land and who report suspicious activities to land-owners or authorities. Under the guise of rural-crime prevention the Government is severely impacting the ninety-nine percent of us who treat all lands with respect, whether it is private or public. Those of us who operate small rural businesses which depend upon non-resident hunting will also be impacted as Saskatchewan no longer continues as a welcoming, world class place to hunt the vast flocks of waterfowl as well as the big game and other game birds we are known for.

It's time for hunters, fishers, bird watchers, bird banders, photographers, responsible trail riders and all going-for-walk-in-nature citizens to speak out. We must step beyond the us vs them.



Photo by Joe Schmutz

The destructive scenarios above are real. Yet, we cannot abide by harsh and single-path solutions that miss the mark by so wide a margin.

We call on our Saskatchewan Government to table the current proposal and create a round-table with province-wide representation to sit down and devise a solution that works.

-Saskatchewan Outdoor Enthusiasts Alliance