



2025 Saskatchewan Crops Forum

Conference Summary

Saskatchewan CROPS FORUM

Crop Commission AGMs & Industry Speakers

On January 14 and 15, approximately 300 people gathered at the Western Development Museum in Saskatoon to participate in the very first Saskatchewan Crops Forum. The event was hosted by SaskOilseeds, SaskBarley, Sask Wheat, and Saskatchewan Pulse Growers. The new farmer-focused event featured commission AGMs, keynote speakers, and a live podcast taping. Farmers from across the province, industry experts, and thought leaders came together to celebrate, discuss, and play a foundational role in setting direction for Saskatchewan's powerful agriculture sector.

To review each commission's 2023–2024 annual report, visit their websites:

- saskbarley.com
- saskoilseeds.com
- saskpulse.com
- saskwheat.ca





Leadership Keynote



SPEAKER

General Rick Hillier

Canadian Military (Retired)

Leadership is key to moving forward and pushing through the challenges facing us globally. During his keynote address, retired Canadian General Rick Hillier shared that in the army everyone is a leader. When needed, you're expected to step up.

"Everybody in this room is a leader. You're a leader in your own personal life, aren't you?" Hillier said during his presentation at the Saskatchewan Crops Forum. "You decide what you're going to do. How you're going to do it. When you're going to do it. You actually lay out for yourself what you want to achieve in life."

As a leader, you have to have a vision and know what you're trying to achieve long-term. From there, strategy is needed and then plan to get it done. Priorities are required so that people will get behind and support you, Hillier shared.

"Nothing replaces that eyeball-to-eyeball contact. Nothing. That's when you build relationships, and relationships help keep you moving," he added. ■

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Everyone is a leader of something and should be relied upon to step up when needed.
- The COVID-19 pandemic impacted leadership credibility in the Western world.
- When you're a leader, you have to have a vision and know what you're trying to achieve.
- Relationships are built through in-person eye-to-eye contact.
- Strong, ethical leadership is needed to unite diverse communities and combat divisive policies.

Research Investments Panel

MODERATOR Shaun Haney *RealAgriculture*



PANELISTS



Angela Bedard-Haughn

Dean of the College of Agriculture and Bioresources, University of Saskatchewan



Bill Greuel

Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Government of Saskatchewan



Steve Webb

CEO, Global Institute for Food Security



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Canada invests less in research and development than its international counterparts, specifically on downstream investment and commercialization.
- Researchers are limited to five years of funding, which is not enough for the sector to reach its potential.
- Researchers and those further down the research stream need to work together and step out of their silos.

At this year's Saskatchewan Crops Forum, RealAgriculture's Shaun Haney facilitated a discussion on research investments with panelists Steve Webb, CEO of the Global Institute for Food Security, Angela Bedard-Haughn, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Bioresources at the University of Saskatchewan, and Bill Greuel, Saskatchewan's Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

Over the past 30 years, Canadian agriculture and Saskatchewan in particular has had many innovation successes, ranging from conservation tillage to crop breeding. However, the panel agreed there are still struggles for those working in the agriculture research and innovation space.

Canada is investing less in research and development than its international counterparts, specifically on downstream investment and commercialization, said Greuel. Bedard-Haughn added there needs to be supports put in place to assist in commercialization and make scientists' innovations available to farmers.

Both Bedard-Haughn and Greuel shared agricultural innovation faces an image problem.

Bedard-Haughn pointed out agriculture isn't always recognized as innovative, as many still view the industry as pitchforks and red barns. Greuel added, Canadians don't view ag as something worth investing in federally.

"In the last 25 years, the amount of corporate that has come into Canada has decreased in the ag space from where we were when I started my career," Webb stated during the discussion. "I think it's a function of structural change and consolidation within the industry. We still have great interactions with the corporate partners that we have here in Canada, and I think that's absolutely essential. We need to continue to cultivate that."

Another struggle researchers face is short funding terms. The longest funding term researchers receive is five years and in order for their work to be bigger in scope and provide maximum benefit to farmers and industry, they need more money over a longer time period.

"There's not a really good mechanism for us to have that continuity of a basic program in the way that you might see in some other countries around

the world," said Bedard-Haughn.

Researchers and those further down the research stream need to work together and step out of their silos, both Greuel and Webb stressed. Webb shared there aren't any development institutions to fill the gap and bring innovations to the commercialization stage — adding there needs to be a better regulatory environment for this to happen.

"I spent a ton of time in Ottawa advocating for the agriculture sector, for investment and value-added research. It's so out-of-sight, out-of-mind in Ottawa. I think one of the most important things that we can do is keep advocating for investment in this sector," Greuel said.

The panel advocated for increased collaboration, leveraging Saskatchewan's unique ecosystem, and they emphasized the importance of sustainability, resilience, and technological advancements. They called for continued advocacy to federal and provincial governments to ensure adequate funding for agricultural research. ■



Global Economic Outlook



SPEAKER

Mark Tully

Senior Manager of Market Research, Nutrien

Editor's note: This presentation was given the week before Donald Trump was inaugurated as the American president.

There's a lot of uncertainty across the business world for 2025. With a new administration taking office in the United States, high government debt, geopolitical changes, and volatile commodity prices, particularly in energy, it's hard to forecast what the year will hold.

"We're not fully through what could be another stretch of inflation with some of the policy that's around the corner, particularly south of the border. One of the world's biggest economies, China, has also faced some challenging growth over the last couple of years," Mark Tully shared during the global economic outlook presentation. "Another major mark of uncertainty, as you move into 2025, is how much is the one of the world's biggest economies

(China), particularly from an ag import, perspective, going to participate in 2025 and beyond."

Since the pandemic, there's been volatility in commodity prices. Inflation has driven high global freight rates, and Tully expects this to continue throughout 2025 due to conflicts happening around the world. He believes this will continue to cause major disruptions in energy markets.

Another uncertainty facing 2025 is the tariff threats uttered by U.S. President Donald Trump. These tariffs will impact global trade. For Canadian agriculture, the tariffs will have a varied impact across crops. Crops like spring wheat and processed canola don't ship much to the U. S., but crops, including oats and dry beans, are exported to the south.

Nutrien is expecting the North American crop acreage to remain stable for the 2025 growing season. However, there will be a shift to more corn acres in the U.S. as it's more profitable to grow.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Monitor the evolving geopolitical landscape and policy changes, especially the potential implementation of tariffs by the U.S. on Canadian products.
- Analyze the supply and demand fundamentals for key agricultural inputs like nitrogen, phosphate, and sulfur, and their potential impact on input costs and availability.
- Stay informed on the trade dynamics between Canada and the U.S., and the potential implications for Canadian agricultural exports and the domestic market.
- The weaker Canadian dollar is good for exports including agriculture. The stronger U.S. dollar is expected to remain for the foreseeable future.

Crop protection product prices will stabilize due to improved global supply from a return to normal trade flows.

Regarding fertilizer markets, Tully said he forecasts stable demand for Western Canada fertilizer due to the stable acreage. Potash is currently trading below 10-year levels, which is making it more available. Nutrien is projecting potash demand will continue to grow globally as Russia hasn't been able to move product to market.

Nitrogen supply, though, is constrained due to geopolitical issues, which, he predicts, will continue to cause problems for a bit.

Chinese domestic policy has tightened urea supplies. China has increased its domestic food production, using more of the fertilizer domestically and not exporting as much. This has driven India to find other supplies ramping up international demand and causing volatility, Tully explains, adding this will

continue in 2025.

"In the start of this '24/'25 fertilizer year, particularly for Urea Ammonium Nitrate (UAN), but also notable for ammonia and urea, is that (the U.S.) trade balance has declined significantly, and they have not imported enough product ahead of this next growing season to balance overall supply," Tully said. "We actually see historically tight nitrogen fertilizer inventory south of the border today, which should drive some demand in this first quarter to procure some product ahead of the spring season."

Wet weather in fall stopped U.S. farmers from completing all of their fall fertilizer applications, so they will need to make these applications come springtime, Tully added.

Tully finished his presentation noting the weaker Canadian dollar is good for exports, including agriculture. The stronger U.S. dollar is expected to remain for the foreseeable future. ■





Curse of Politics

(live podcast
recording)



Jordan Lechnitz



Kory Teneycke



David Herle



Scott Reid



WATCH OR LISTEN
TO THE EPISODE
ON YOUTUBE



Editor's note: This podcast episode/presentation was recorded on Jan. 15, 2025.

A lot is happening in the world of Canadian politics. With Prime Justin Trudeau having announced he's stepping down as leader of the Liberal party, a whirlwind leadership race has begun in order to fill the vacant seat by late March.

During a Curse of Politics podcast recording at the Saskatchewan Crops Forum, the panel, including David Herle, Scott Reid, Jordan Lechnitz and Kory Teneycke, all agreed the leadership race is between Mark Carney and Chrystia Freeland.

"We know that (Carney) can operate in that policy space and be a smart guy in that room, but is he able to make that connection with regular people? Even if those regular people are Liberals, and is he able to actually carry an authentic understanding about what's going on in people's lives?" Lechnitz questioned.

For Carney to gain Liberal support back from the public he will need to make a stance on the carbon tax and break away from it, Teneycke stated. Pierre Poilievre will no longer be able to have the carbon tax election later this year that he was banking on, added Lechnitz.

"The carbon tax might be taken off the table, but I don't think that's ultimately what's going to really shift the ground that we're fighting on. I think it's going to be the tariff fight with the United States," said Teneycke. "I think for Carney, given his background, he has a unique set of experiences that might look good in that environment."

For Freeland, the campaign struggle will be separating herself from Trudeau, Lechnitz said. As the previous deputy prime minister, Freeland has been closely tied to Trudeau and is viewed by the public as another version of him.

The next federal election will be focused on affordability and who can handle American President Donald Trump the best, said Lechnitz.

"I'm really worried about the unity of the country during this period, and I think we've seen the fault lines emerge as a result of the pressure these tariffs are going to put on our economy," Teneycke said. "I think there's things like that that we could do that would be very smart for us, make us less dependent on the United States for the sale of our energy assets, but also other things."

During the question-and-answer session following the podcast taping, concerns about the national debt were raised with the panelists pointing out

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Liberal leadership race is between Mark Carney and Chrystia Freeland.
- For Carney to gain Liberal support back from the public, he will need to make a stance on the carbon tax and break away from it.
- Pierre Poilievre will no longer be able to have the carbon tax election he was banking on.
- For Freeland, the campaign struggle will be separating herself from Trudeau.
- The next federal election will be focused on affordability and who can handle Trump the best.
- The federal debt level isn't a current concern, but could become a problem depending on how the tariff situation shakes out.

most voters don't pay attention to the national debt until it becomes a problem. The debt level was much higher in the 1990s than it is currently.

"COVID added a lot of debt to the Canadian balance sheet, not enough to be dangerous, according to most economists. But if we were to have to get into that level of compensation again because of the tariff thing, that could put the Canadian debt levels in a much more difficult and dangerous situation," Hurley said. ■

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