



**Opportunity Knocks: How Should Saskatchewan Answer?
A Critical Assessment of the Regina-Area AI Data Centre**

June 2026

Context

- Bell Canada to build a \$1.7 billion AI data centre near Regina
- Became public with rezoning application issued in February
- Site is 160 acres of agricultural land in the RM of Sherwood
- Officially announced by the premier on March 17
- Will require 300 megawatts of baseload power—equivalent to electricity demand of roughly 300,000 households
- Closed-loop cooling system, not draw water from municipal water sources
- 1,600 jobs: 800+ construction, 80 permanent, 750+ in spinoffs
- Opportunities: applied research, student training, commercialization

Considerations

- Using 160 acres of farmland, require new infrastructure connections
- Regina has unused/underused institutional and commercial space
- Concern regarding impact on Saskatchewan's electricity system
- SaskPower under significant pressure
 - Seeking consecutive 3.9 percent rate increases in 2026 and 2027
 - Record capital investments in new generation and infrastructure replacement
 - AI power demand part of rationale for refurbishment of coal power
- Governance Challenges
 - Four of the seven RM councillors abruptly resigned
 - Government appointed replacements
 - Lack of public engagement prior to decision
 - Questions about local democratic processes

Questions

- What are the unanswered policy issues and questions?
- Has public process for such a huge project been sufficient?
- What should be Bell's role in public engagement?
- What are the benefits to the rural municipality?
- How to deal with public opposition to AI data centres?
- Are small employment benefits worth the costs?