

HIGHWAY 80 & 49 PILOT PROJECT TO INCREASE WEIGHT EXTENDED

The Ministry of Highways plans to continue a pilot which will see temporary weight increases on a portion of Highway 80 and Highway 49 that would allow primary weights during the winter weight season only for an additional year.

KEY FACTS

- The ministry has received numerous inquiries to increase the amount of permissible weight on these highways from local stakeholders (including municipalities and the forestry industry).
- In response to these inquiries the ministry had a pilot for temporary weight increase on a portion of Highway 80 and Highway 49 that would allow primary weights during the winter weight season only during the winter of 2022/23.
- The winter conditions in 2022/23 did not reflect a typical winter in Saskatchewan and the ministry was unable to evaluate the pilot. Usually there are warm stretches in February and/or March, but these did not occur.
- The ministry will extend the pilot for a temporary weight increase on a portion of Highway 80 and Highway 49 that would allow primary weights during the winter weight season only during the winter of 2023/24 to further evaluate the pilot.
- The winter weight season is typically in effect from November 16 through to March 14, however, if weather remains mild the program may be postponed because without sufficient freezing, extra weight can damage pavement and the road beneath.
- The ministry will temporarily change the weight classification of both Highway 80 and Highway 49 to primary weight through a Minister's Order.
- The ministry will plan on inspecting/reviewing the condition of the highway after the pilot to evaluate opportunities that may exist in the future on these roadways and potentially other locations across the network.

Question & Answers

Why wasn't a decision made to permanently change the weights after one year of the pilot?

The winter conditions in 2022/23 did not reflect a typical winter in Saskatchewan and the ministry was unable to evaluate the pilot properly. A typical winter with some warm stretches in February and/or March where the ministry would be able to evaluate the damage caused by changing the weights.

Will the pilot be allowing primary winter weights?

The pilot project will be allowing these sections of highway to have primary weights during the winter season. Primary winter weights will not be allowed.

Why is the ministry changing the permissible weights during the winter weight season only?

Colder temperatures during the winter months freeze the subgrade resulting in a stronger road. As a result, more weight can be transported on provincial highways without damaging the road.

What will happen if we experience a mild winter?

If weather remains mild the program may be postponed or end earlier because without sufficient freezing extra weight can damage the pavement and the road beneath.

How will the stakeholders know the change in permissible weight has occurred?

The ministry will contact the local RMs to let them know that the weights have changed. The information will be part of the ministry's implementation of Winter Weights by regulation and posted on Saskatchewan.ca. Website - www.saskatchewan.ca/truckingweights

What will happen to the weight classification in the spring or when winter weight season ends?

The highways will return to their original weight classification.

Highway 80 between Highway 16 and Highway 10 is an 8000 kg (eight-tonne) restricted roadway.

Highway 49 between the Manitoba border and Pelly is a secondary weight roadway, Highway 49 between Pelly and Norquay is a 9-month primary weight roadway (Secondary from March 15 – June 15)

What will happen if the highway shows failures during or after the pilot due to the additional weight?

While there is a risk failures could appear, the ministry is planning to inspect the condition throughout the season to minimize this.

If incremental damage occurs, the ministry would need to work with the RMs to share in opportunities for improvement. Depending on the damage, the ministry may need to revert to a gravel surface.

When would the ministry rebuild the highway if failures occur?

The ministry does not currently have plans for capital investment on either of these highways for major construction or paving. A partnership with the local RMs may allow a project to improve the highway to move ahead sooner.

Can the previous partnership discussions begin if failure occurs?

The discussions regarding a partnership can continue, however the previously discussed cost estimates may be different depending on the road condition.

What happens if the pilot is successful?

It is currently unknown if a third year of the pilot would proceed or if permanent decisions for weight designation would occur. One outcome may be that the current Alternate Truck Route would not be required in the winter months.

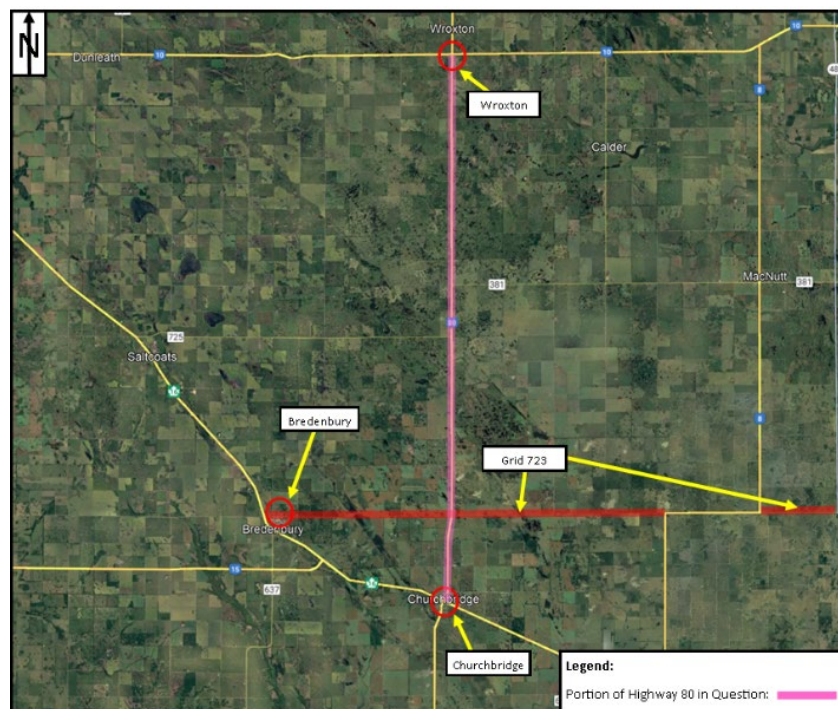


Figure 1: Highway 80 Between Highway 16 and Highway 10 (Source: Google Earth)



Figure 2: Highway 49 Between the Manitoba border and Norquay (Source: Google Earth)